

The

January-February 1997

No. 1

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# Internationalist



Militarization, Murderous Feuds in Ruling Party,  
Mass Hunger As Guerrillas, Peasant Unrest Spread

## Mexico: Regime in Crisis



Robert Fox/Impact Visuals

**For Workers Revolution Across the Borders!**

**Internationalist  
Group Formed...3**

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Front page photo: May Day 1996, Mexico City  
Subscription blank graphic based on a poster  
by V.A. Rodchenko, *Books* (1925)

# Introducing *The Internationalist*

At a time when the mouthpieces of the capitalist ruling classes trumpet the supposed "death of communism," *The Internationalist* declares that the goals of the *Communist Manifesto* of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, written 150 years ago, of the Communist International under the Bolshevik leaders V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky, and of Trotsky's Fourth International are more valid and urgent than ever.

The counterrevolution that destroyed the Soviet Union represented a historic defeat for the world working class. Yet the bourgeois triumphalism following in its wake is already beginning to dissipate. What has emerged is not a New World Order dominated by a single "superpower," but a mounting *disorder* of nationalist bloodletting, imperialist rivalries and repeated outbreaks of sharp class struggles.

What is dead is not communism, but Stalinism, which is the antithesis of Lenin's program of international socialist revolution. Indeed, events of the last few years have fully confirmed Trotsky's warnings: that a conservative nationalist bureaucracy, with Stalin's dogma of "building socialism in one country" as its ideology, had betrayed the revolution, undermining its historic achievements and ultimately preparing the way for counterrevolution if the workers did not rise up in time to oust the Stalinists, who had usurped political power from working class. That is what has now happened, as the bureaucratically degenerated and deformed workers states of the USSR and East Europe came crashing down under the combined weight of imperialist pressure and their own internal contradictions.

Meanwhile, the maximum program of the social democrats, those ever-loyal servants of imperialist capital, was to build a "welfare state in one country." Yet today the capitalists and their governments are ripping up even the most minimal social welfare measures, consigning more than 40 million workers worldwide to the dregs of unemployment and ruthlessly attempting to drive down wages in order to boost profits. The social democrats' pipedream was no less illusory than that of the Stalinists, for the fundamental loyalties of both were not to the revolutionary interests of the international working class but to maintaining capitalism. Both brands of reformism, in their various national variants, have led the workers and oppressed off to die in imperialist carnage and prepared one defeat after another.

*continued on page 20*

## *The Internationalist*

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for the Reforging of the Fourth International

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## Reforge the Fourth International!

# Internationalist Group Founded

*The following is the initial section of the founding statement of the Internationalist Group, approved on 24 August 1996 and finalized on 31 August 1996.*

The purge of longtime leading cadres by the International Communist League on June 8 and its breaking of fraternal relations with the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil little over a week later, as the ICL fled from a struggle over the state (cops out of the union) which it had encouraged, signal a rightist departure for the organization which for more than three decades has represented the political continuity of revolutionary Trotskyism internationally. These two events are directly related: the bureaucratic expulsions were in part to get rid of an obstacle to the breaking of relations with the LQB and the flagrant desertion under fire in a key class battle that this represented. Taken together, they are an indication that the new leadership of the [ICL's] International Secretariat is moving toward centrism, in glaring contradiction to the Marxist program the ICL still formally upholds.

The counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union was a major defeat for the world proletariat. Yet the *defeatist* conclusions the ICL leadership has drawn from this are an echo of the bourgeoisie's "death of communism" campaign. These erroneous conclusions are in line with the tendency of the "new I.S." to retreat from the class struggle and adopt a policy of passive propagandism. As noted in our July 1996 bulletin, *From a Drift Toward Abstentionism to Desertion from the Class Struggle*, the present period is "marked by a *bourgeois offensive against the working class*, but is also a *period of turbulent proletarian struggles that can pass from the defensive to the offensive*. The key, as always, is the fight to forge a revolutionary leadership."

In the course of carrying out its turn, the "new I.S." has had to trample on the Spartacist norms of democratic centralism, even directly violating the statutes of the Spartacist League/U.S. (disregarding rules for party trials, introducing "committee discipline" for members of leading bodies, declaring null and void the confidentiality of private communication between comrades), while carrying out a deeply destructive purge over the false fights it waged in Germany and Mexico and its headlong flight from the class battle in Brazil. As explained in the documents of our bulletin, the ICL leadership has simultaneously begun to adopt openly revisionist positions on fundamental questions such as the nature of Stalinism and the character of the revolutionary party.

We have fought against this turn, and would be doing so today in the ranks of the ICL were it not for our expulsion, which had the character of a preemptive strike to forestall a factional struggle. (While cynically citing in ex post facto justification of the expulsions the fact that we did not form a fac-

tion, at the time the I.S. in fact took a series of steps to limit and *cut off* discussion of our documents.) As members and leaders of the ICL we clearly stated to the membership the extent of our agreements and disagreements, noting that we had not been allowed the time necessary for far-reaching discussions necessary to form a faction before being hit with, and having to fight against, the avalanche of organizational measures in the political purge. Since being peremptorily removed from the ranks of the party by bureaucratic fiat, and particularly following the I.S.' dramatic fleeing from the class struggle in Brazil, we have analyzed the origins and meaning of this sharp turn to the right.

In addition to documenting and analyzing these fights and recording the degeneration that is well under way in the ICL leadership, it is necessary to undertake the struggle for a new leadership that continues the fight, begun by the Spartacist tendency, to reforge an authentically Trotskyist Fourth International as the world party of socialist revolution. The central thesis of the 1938 Transitional Program of the FI fully retains its validity today: "The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of the revolutionary leadership.... the crisis of the proletarian leadership, having become the crisis in mankind's culture, can be resolved only by the Fourth International." It is our conclusion that the present leadership of the ICL has shown—by its erratic course, its cynical use of lies, slander and now agent-baiting, and by its abandonment of a key class battle in Brazil—that it is incapable of pursuing a coherent revolutionary policy, much less leading a proletarian revolution. As part of the fight to overcome the crisis of leadership by constructing the indispensable instrument for the workers' victory in the class struggle, the Leninist party, we hereby form the *Internationalist Group* while seeking to cohere a Fourth Internationalist league with cothinkers in other countries.

The IG fights to cohere the nucleus of the revolutionary party which must be built as the leadership of the working class. This must be a party of professional revolutionaries, as defined by Lenin in *What Is To Be Done?* which seeks to fuse together the most advanced elements of the working class with declassed intellectuals. Fighting to build the communist leadership of the proletariat, it must act as the "tribune of the people," the champion of all the oppressed against the capitalist-imperialist oppressors. A socialist fight against special oppression must include a concerted effort to win the best fighters from among the oppressed to the proletarian cause. In contrast with the new line of the ICL leadership, which sees "party-building" as a task to be pursued while self-consciously standing apart from and even withdrawing from the workers' struggles—counseling the LQB to "pull our hands out of the boiling water" of the class struggle!—we hold with Lenin and



Trotsky that this party must be built as the vanguard of the class. The I.S.'s conception that a group of experienced class-struggle militants such as the Brazilian LQB, "as former leaders of mass workers' organizations at the local level," could not possibly accept the ICL's program testifies in fact to a profound loss of confidence in the Trotskyist program by key elements of the ICL leadership. The IG must combine theoretical struggle to defend and extend the Marxist program with fighting to provide leadership commensurate with its real capacities, seeking to "help the masses in the process of the daily struggle to find the bridge between present demands and the socialist program of the revolution" (Transitional Program).

We stand on the revolutionary heritage of the Marxist movement, from the *Communist Manifesto* of Marx and Engels, to Lenin's fight to build the Bolshevik vanguard party and his synthesis of the Marxist position on the state, in *The State and Revolution*, which provided the programmatic armament for the Russian October Revolution of 1917, the epochal event of modern history and the first successful workers revolution in history. We lay claim as well to the heritage of the first four congresses of the Communist International, under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky, and to the fight of the Russian and International Left Opposition leading to the foundation of the Fourth International in 1938 on the basis of the Transitional Program. We stand as well with Trotsky and James P. Cannon, the founder of U.S. Trotskyism, in the fight against the petty-bourgeois opposition led by Shachtman which abandoned the unconditional military defense of the USSR in 1939-40. A revolutionary party must be built in the best tradition of Cannonism.

Trotsky's theory of the permanent revolution sums up the experience of the three Russian Revolutions and constitutes the program for new Octobers in the countries of belated capitalist development, where the unresolved tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution can be fulfilled only under the dictatorship of the proletariat, by means of the socialist revolution which must be extended to the centers of world capitalism. The program of international socialist revolution is bound up with the very nature of the imperialist epoch, in which we are still living and in which humanity is not only not progressing towards social emancipation but is experiencing wholesale social regression across the board. Rosa Luxemburg's formula at the time of the first imperialist world war at the beginning of the century, "socialism or barbarism," is even more valid today, as mankind stands before the alternative of socialism or nuclear annihilation. The positive resolution of this dilemma will not be through impotent pacifism but by victorious class war.

Reflecting the pressures of the anti-Soviet Cold War, the Fourth International was wracked by a crisis engendered by

Pabloist revisionism, which denied the need for an independent Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard of the proletariat and instead chased after a variety of non-proletarian false leaderships, from Tito in the late 1940s to Castro and Mao in the '60s. This led to the destruction of the Fourth International in 1951-53. We stand with the fight against Pabloism which was led by James P. Cannon, albeit in a belated and partial manner. This fight was continued by the Revolutionary Tendency in the early 1960s as it opposed the SWP's embrace of Castroism, the existing black leadership (both liberal and nationalist), and the SWP's reunification with Pablo/Mandel. Of key importance in the U.S. is the perspective of revolutionary integrationism—for black liberation through socialist revolution—put forward by Richard Fraser and further developed by the Spartacist tendency. This methodology has also been crucial for work in Brazil. We continue to fight for the Spartacist program and heritage, which grew out of the RT, as we have over the last quarter century as members and leaders of the Spartacist League/U.S. and of the international Spartacist tendency/International Communist League.

The collapse of the Stalinist bureaucracies and the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union dramatically confirms the correctness of the Trotskyists' fight for unconditional military defense of the bureaucratically degenerated/deformed workers states against imperialism and internal counterrevolution and for proletarian political revolution to oust the parasitic Stalinist caste whose bureaucratic rule and conservative nationalist program prepared the way for capitalist restoration. *Against the bourgeois lie of a supposed "death of communism," we proclaim that communism lives in the struggles of the working class and the program of its vanguard.* Our central task is to forge the party that is the living embodiment and instrument of that program in leading the workers and oppressed to victory. ■



David King, Trotsky

Trotsky, Lenin and Kamenev at a 1920 rally in Moscow.



## U.S. Troops Out! For Revolutionary Reunification!

# Nationwide Strike Shakes South Korea

JANUARY 1—The class struggle exploded in South Korea as 1996 came to an end, as over 370,000 workers launched a general strike that was the largest labor battle in the country's history. Industrial giants like the Hyundai Motor Corporation and Daewoo Heavy Industries shut down, while 10,000 workers sat in at the Seoul Railway Station. Workers at hospitals, subways and hundreds of other enterprises also joined the action. The clash grew dramatic as police poured tear gas into the crowds of strikers. The explicitly political strike is directed against a new labor law which opens the way for mass layoffs and delays legalization of new unions (i.e., it enforces the stranglehold of the present government-sponsored unions) until the year 2000 at the national level and even later at the company level.

The anti-labor law was approved in a secret, pre-dawn session of the kept parliament, in which members of the ruling New Korea Party met by themselves. In a seven-minute session they also passed legislation greatly increasing the powers of the hated Agency for National Security Planning, formerly the Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA). Even members of bourgeois opposition parties warned that the government sought to enact dictatorial powers, and they carried out sit-ins as part of a boycott of the legislature. But as dissident capitalist politicians and reformist labor leaders seek to maintain this frontal collision between labor and capital within the bounds of pressure politics, the mass strike and political crisis acutely pose the need for revolutionary leadership fighting for proletarian revolution.

Called originally as an indefinite general strike, the mass action was organized not only by the "unauthorized" Korean Council of Trade Unions (KCTU, or Minjunochong) but also by the Korean Federation of Trade Unions (KFTU, or Nochong), which traditionally echoes the government line but surprised the regime by joining the strike. Both federations called a temporary halt to the general strike for New Year's, vowing to renew and intensify it after the holiday. Korean student groups, which have frequently battled with the repressive forces of this heavily militarized garrison state, protested in



Reuters

Clouds of tear gas as police attack strikers in Seoul, 27 December 1995.

solidarity with the strikers. An important aspect of the strikes has been the participation of women workers, including in leadership roles, among hospital unionists and other sectors.

Spokesmen for the employers' federation denounced the unions and vowed to mobilize scabs, while the government of president Kim Young Sam threatened "stern countermeasures." Finance and Economy Minister Han Sung Soo ranted that "The Government will not tolerate this illegal strike for any reason." To emphasize their hard-line stance, the government ordered "unusual military drills" on New Year's Day, "using helicopters to simulate North Korean commando attacks," together with troop exercises and military aircraft buzzing the capital city of Seoul (*Korea Herald*, 1 January). The workers' struggle has thrown a wild card into the negotiations of South Korea and its U.S. imperialist overlords with the bureaucratically deformed workers state of North Korea. While ostensibly aimed at the "red threat" from the North, Seoul's New Year's war games are aimed at the "enemy within"—South Korea's powerful and combative working class.

The Western press wrung its hands over the politicization and "intransigence" of the strikers. Indeed, many Korean workers are aware that their general strike action poses a showdown with the government. Press reports quoted workers' chants of

"Overthrow the Kim Young Sam government" and "We should smash down the Kim Young Sam regime at once!" The *New York Times* (30 December 1996) complained of a striking hotel cook's comment: "As a union member, I don't see much difference between Kim Young Sam and the old military dictatorship." Whether with a general in the president's seat or a civilian politician, state repression has repeatedly struck hard at union organizers, student activists and leftists.

As the Russian Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky repeatedly emphasized, any real general strike inevitably poses the question of which class shall rule. Writing about France in the mid-1930s, Trotsky stressed:

"Whatever may be the slogans and the motive for which the general strike is initiated, if it includes the genuine masses, and if these masses are quite resolved to struggle, the general strike inevitably poses before all the classes in the nation the question: *Who will be the master?*... The general strike poses directly the question of the conquest of power by the proletariat."

—Leon Trotsky, "Once Again, Whither France?" (March 1935)

Korea's militant working class and its allies have begun an important battle, for which it is crucial to be armed politically. *What they require above all is a leadership, a revolutionary party, that can carry through the struggle for power to victory.*

Class-conscious workers and radical students must today be asking themselves what would replace the current regime if it were brought down. Kim Young Sam is a case study of why Korean workers must break with all sectors of the bourgeoisie. He got his start as a leading liberal "democracy campaigner" against the military dictatorship. Today he is a figurehead for the same old ruling elite, as the iron fist of military repression is covered by a very thin glove of "civilian" rule. The bourgeois "opposition" of today are the would-be Kim Young Sams of tomorrow.

For the Korean proletariat to wield its enormous power in the service of its own liberation and that of all the oppressed, the urgent need is for a revolutionary workers party. Such a party can only be built in the struggle to reforge the Fourth International, to lead the workers' struggle towards the conquest of proletarian power throughout the world. In South Korea, which went from Japanese colonial rule to domination by the U.S. army and puppet rulers installed by Washington, with the front line of the Cold War running through the peninsula, Korean nationalism is strong. This is true not only among students but also in the working masses, who are ferociously exploited and lorded over by the arrogant *chaebol* (monopolies) such as Hyundai, Daewoo, etc., and brutally repressed by their army and police, as in the Kwangju massacre of 1980. But what is needed in the struggle against the military-dominated regime is an *internationalist* fight.

Korea has been subjected to continuous imperialist occupation and domination above all because of its strategic location in Northeast Asia, wedged in between Russia, China and Japan. The North Korean deformed workers state is under tremendous pressure from the U.S. imperialists, with 37,000 American troops just below the 38th Parallel, and the South

Korean militarists with their army of over 600,000 men, while it is being economically squeezed following the destruction of the Soviet Union, which was its main international support.

Trotskyists call for unconditional military defense of North Korea against imperialist attack and counterrevolution. At the same time, we tell the truth about the Stalinist regime of the late Kim Il Sung and his son Kim Il Jong, whose regimented rule features a "personality cult" rivaling that of Joseph Stalin himself. The stultifying bureaucracy and its policy of *Juche*—"self-reliance," that is, the pipedream of "socialism in half a country" based on extreme national autarky—have driven North Korea into a dead end, its economy in shambles amid widespread hunger. While significant numbers of students and workers in the South look to the North, despite the myths spread by the KCIA and the government-guided media, the simple fact is that the Kim Il Sung regime opposes workers revolution in the South.

The working-class upsurge in South Korea underlines the urgency of revolutionary reunification of Korea across the 38th Parallel. This means fighting for a social revolution against the capitalist magnates and militarists in the South combined with workers political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracy of the Kim dynasty in the North. The repeated outbreaks of sharp class struggle by the combative South Korean working class show how real this possibility could be. This spectre stalks both the Southern *chaebols* and the Northern bureaucracy.

South Korea is one of a string of "free world" dictatorships sponsored by the U.S. around the rim of Asia during the Cold War that are beginning to unravel at the seams. As Western capital has poured in to set up low-wage "free trade" plants, a rapidly growing working class is getting a sense of its potential power. Indonesia, in particular, has seen a resurgence of labor and leftist protest, in spite of the vicious crackdown by the Suharto military regime, which took the reins of power by slaughtering a million Communists.

The South Korean proletariat already has years of hard battles behind it against the civilian-military strong-arm regime. The onset of revolutionary struggle there would electrify workers throughout East Asia. Meanwhile, a revolutionary upsurge in all of Korea could show the way for the workers and peasants in the badly eroded deformed workers states of China and Vietnam, who face the growing danger of outright capitalist restoration and the neo-colonial slavery this would mean.

Crucial for revolutionary struggle in the entire region is its extension to Japan, one-time colonial overlord and today the industrial powerhouse of the region, where racism against the children and grandchildren of Korean slave laborers is a tool for maintaining the subordination of the working class to Japan, Inc. A Trotskyist party must be built in Korea, North and South, through struggle against nationalism and Stalinism, to lead the way to common *internationalist* struggle by the working people of the entire region.

As the proletariat deals new blows to the lie that the class struggle is dead, the advanced workers and radical youth of Korea must take their rightful place in the world struggle for the communism of Lenin and Trotsky. ■





Robert Fox/Impact Visuals

**Mexico City, May Day 1996: More than 250,000 workers protest government's starvation policies. Coffin refers to corporatist CTM "unions" led by Fidel Velázquez which have imposed "neo-liberal" austerity on workers.**

## **Militarization, Murderous Feuds in Ruling Party, Mass Hunger as Guerrillas, Peasant Unrest Spread**

# **Mexico: Regime in Crisis**

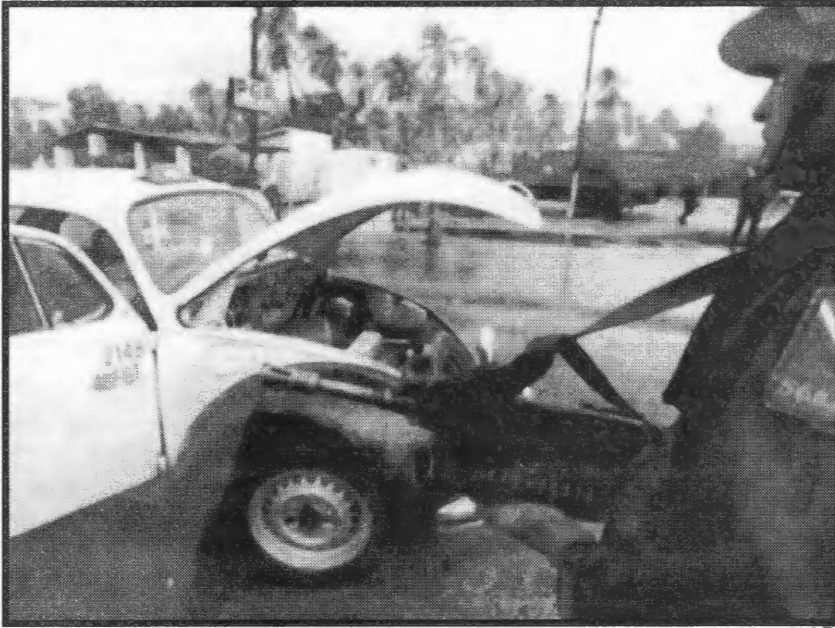
### **Part 1 of 2**

Mexico is lurching toward a social explosion. Almost a decade and a half of brutal "free market" austerity dictated by Washington and Wall Street and enforced by the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), in power since 1929, have built up vast amounts of tinder. Countless thousands of peasants have been thrown off their lands in the last two years by government troops, paramilitary police units and "white guard" private armies. Millions of impoverished agricultural producers find themselves ruined by low international coffee prices and the competition of cheap corn imported from the United States under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). At least two guerrilla armies are active in the largely Indian regions of the South

and West, with clear mass sympathy and support. And as more armed groups are proclaimed in press releases and reported by the army, Mexican president Ernesto Zedillo vows to crush them with "the full force of the state."

In recent months, Mexico has come under the military boot as never before in recent decades. Since 1994, more than 40,000 government troops have encircled the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) stronghold of the Lacandon rain forest area of the southernmost state of Chiapas. Another 12,000 soldiers are cordoning off the north of the state to put down mass peasant unrest. In addition, a reported 23,000 counterinsurgency troops and police are now combing the mountainous state of Guerrero on the Pacific Coast, while thousands more are patrol-

**For Workers Revolution Across the Borders!**



**Soldiers searching taxi in state of Guerrero, July 1996. Mexican government is massively militarizing the country.**

ling Oaxaca and the Huasteca Sierra covering five states on the eastern side of the country, looking for the Revolutionary People's Army (EPR) which appeared on June 28. This is not just a reaction to the new guerrilla group: according to the Mexican Defense Secretariat, Mexico's military forces increased from 170,000 in 1992 (a figure still cited in the U.S. press) to 236,000 in 1996 (*Proceso*, 1 December 1996).

In the cities as well, the huge and hugely corrupt police forces have increasingly been put under military command. In the capital, the former army commander of Guerrero took over the Mexico City police force, installing 20 more generals and ten colonels in key positions. At least 400 commissioned army officers have been placed in attorney generals' offices around the country. Meanwhile, in the name of fighting street crime, a new security law was rammed through Congress in the spring which legally sanctioned wiretapping, requiring modifications to five articles of the Constitution. This massive militarization has been sponsored by the U.S. government, as the Pentagon has been pouring in counterinsurgency equipment, including *more than 200 helicopters*, as well as hundreds of tanks and armored personnel carriers. Supposedly this is for fighting the phony "war on drugs," but you don't burn a marijuana field with tanks. The Mexican military and their Pentagon advisors are clearly preparing to crush *urban* unrest.

For while peasant-based guerrillas get the international headlines, Mexico's working class is growing increasingly fed up with the regime. Harvard-trained economist-president Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León was elected on the program of "prosperity for your family," yet within three weeks of taking office Zedillo, faced with a financial crisis, ordered the disastrous December 1994 peso devaluation. This together with the subsequent austerity measures threw two million workers out of their jobs and slashed real wages by more than 40 percent. Today the purchas-

ing power of the minimum wage (adjusted for inflation) has fallen *below the level of 1940*. Meanwhile, large sectors of the middle class have been devastated by the ruinous interest rates that have led to the shutting down of thousands of small businesses and wiped out years of savings.

This semi-bonapartist regime—in which the massive state and PRI bureaucracies are fused together, papered over by the barest semblance of parliamentary "democracy"—has maintained itself in power for the last 67 years in good part through the iron control it has exercised over the workers movement. The instrument has been a corporatist "union" movement, dominated by the Mexican Workers Federation (CTM) and the Congress of Labor (CT), that chains labor directly to the state party. For decades, huge contingents of workers were trooped through Mexico City's huge Zócalo plaza on May Day to "salute" the president as he reviewed the parade from the balcony of the presidential palace. In 1995, for

the first time, the CTM chief, 96-year-old Fidel Velázquez, canceled the official May Day celebration out of fear of "disorders." Instead, hundreds of thousands marched in a huge anti-government protest. Last year again, the CTM canceled its parade, and instead upwards of 250,000 workers marched, including dissident sections of the CT, protesting government privatization plans and their plummeting incomes.

The regime which as recently as 1990 was described by the right-wing Peruvian novelist Mario Vargas Llosa as "the perfect dictatorship" is unravelling. In state and municipal elections last October, the right-wing National Action Party (PAN) and the "center-left" Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) gained control of the huge working-class and middle-class suburbs in the state of Mexico surrounding the capital. This foreshadows the possibility of a defeat for the PRI in the nerve center of the republic in first-ever elections for mayor of the Federal District, scheduled for next year. In a panicked response to their defeat at the polls, the "dinosaurs" (old-line PRI party bosses) in Congress put an end to negotiations over reform of the electoral system and four days later rammed through a gutted political "reform" bill they hope will guarantee their victory in the 1997 elections. Opposition legislators and editorialists are muttering that this puts an end to the hopes for a "negotiated transition to democracy."

As the PRI machine begins to come apart, a bloody settling of accounts has been unleashed among the competing *camarillas*, cliques and *caciques* (local political bosses or chiefs) who cohabit under the initials of the PRI. First, the party's presidential candidate was assassinated in Tijuana in March 1994, then the head of the party was gunned down in the center of the capital six months later. All signs indicate that feuding factions in the ruling party are behind the murders, possibly including former president Carlos Salinas and



his brother Raúl, now in jail in the high-security Almoloya prison. In August, the newspaper of the Archdiocese of Mexico wrote: "The resources used to carry out the crime, but especially the way it was handled afterward, make it clear that...the mastermind was in the highest circles of power."

As the PRI regime decays from within, any number of events could set things off. But an explosion of mass unrest is not the same thing as a revolution. Poverty in the urban areas is so extreme that the stage is set for hunger riots. Already, crowds of hundreds of urban and rural poor have repeatedly set upon trains to empty them of food supplies. In mid-May, peasants in Chihuahua fell upon a CONASUPO (state food agency) warehouse and made off with 271 tons of beans. Two weeks later, in San Nicolás de Garza, a working-class suburb of Monterrey, residents stopped a freight train by putting ties across the tracks, then some 400 people, mostly women and children, swarmed over the box cars, carrying away 50 tons of corn being imported from the U.S. According to the police chief, everyone in the neighborhood took some of the grain home, in order to "have tortillas at least" to eat. In June, peasants in Durango emptied a freight car of wheat, and in July a rail car of bottled water was "liberated" (see *La Jornada*, 31 May and John Ross, *México Bárbaro*, 3 September 1996).

The Mexican working people are being plagued by unemployment, wage cuts, hunger and literal starvation. In the short run, such conditions have dampened social struggle and the number of strikes has declined as workers fear for their jobs. At the same time, there is a rapidly growing proletariat in the *maquiladora* (free-trade zone) plants, particularly along the northern border with the U.S. While output in industries producing for the Mexican market has fallen sharply due to the brutal austerity, the number of workers in the *maquiladora* plants has increased by one-fifth in the last couple of years, to over 600,000. And while their wages are miserable (as low as US\$50 a month, or 20 cents an hour) and they work under conditions of police-state control, this extremely young workforce can potentially wield real power against their employers, who include most major U.S. and Japanese corporations. With companies eager to keep production and profits flowing, in 1995 for the first time in many years several wild-cat strikes in the free-trade zone plants won recognition for dissident workers' groups.

The scope of the intertwining of the Mexican and U.S. economies is vast. Televisions, computers and most household appliances are now manufactured in huge industrial parks with thousands of workers each from Tijuana to Nogales to Ciudad Juárez, Nuevo Laredo, Reynosa and Matamoros. In a trend accelerated by NAFTA, Mexican auto workers now produce not only seat belts and electrical harnesses but engine blocks and entire autos and trucks for the North American market. Mexico is now one of the U.S.' three biggest trading partners, with 81 percent of its exports consisting of manufactured goods, and most of that trade consisting of exchanges between different units of the same company. This means that a strike by auto workers against General Motors or Ford in Ohio or in Ontario, Canada is quickly felt in Hermosillo and San Luis Potosí, and *vice versa*. But this tremen-

dous potential for international struggle will not be led by the current misleaders of labor; it urgently requires the building of an internationalist leadership with the program and determination to wage such struggles.

While NAFTA has accelerated the potential for cross-border labor action, it has led to a wholesale imperialist assault on the lucrative parts of Mexico's economy. U.S. financiers are seeking to buy up railroads, telecommunications lines and their biggest target: the oil industry nationalized by General Lázaro Cárdenas in 1938. Protests by workers and peasants in the oil-producing states and a revolt by PRI legislators this fall forced Zedillo to pare back plans for petrochemical privatizations. But the U.S. has *already* seized financial control of PEMEX (the state-owned Petróleos Mexicanos), as the \$20-billion "bailout" engineered by Clinton to protect American investments required that receipts from Mexico's oil sales be deposited in an account in the Federal Reserve Bank in New York as collateral! Meanwhile, the scope of U.S. investment in the northern half of Mexico has become so extensive that regionalist sentiment is growing among the local bourgeoisie, leading in several states to moves for autonomy from financial control by Mexico City.

Wall Street's grab for the Mexican economy will produce a backlash of nationalist sentiment. Yet to effectively fight the massive onslaught against the Mexican working and poor people requires an *internationalist* fight against the Yankee imperialists and their junior partners, the neocolonial bourgeois rulers of Mexico. Marxists defend Mexico against the U.S. attempts to buy up the country as we fight for workers revolution on both sides of the 2,000-mile border. In this struggle, the several million Mexican workers in the U.S. can be a key link in uniting the working class in combat against the common enemy.

Today the economic crisis lashing Mexico and the political crisis of the PRI-government machine are producing a parallel crisis in its machinery for control of labor. This poses the urgent need to *break from the bourgeoisie*. Marxists must use this important opening to fight for the class independence of labor through the formation of *elected workers committees*, independent of the control of the state and *any* of the bourgeois parties. This can only be done through a militant mobilization of the workers' power, including *sit-down strikes* and *plant occupations*, with the formation of *workers defense groups* to combat the CTM goons. And as Leon Trotsky emphasized almost half a century ago, writing of the universal tendency toward state control of the unions, there can be no genuine independence of labor without a *revolutionary leadership*.

This leadership must be forged in combat against not only the *charro* bureaucrats of the corporatist "union" federations but also the *neo-charro* dissident bureaucrats. To build such a class-struggle leadership requires a break with the Mexican nationalism that poses a false unity of the workers with their "national" bosses, and a fight for international workers revolution. A *revolutionary workers party* is the indispensable instrument to lead the daily struggle of the Mexican working people to a fight for a workers and peasants government, and for extension of the revolution across the border to embrace the powerful U.S. working class. Such parties must be built in

Mexico and the U.S. as part of the struggle to reforge an authentically Trotskyist Fourth International.

### Murderous Intrigue at the Top: The Old Regime Totters

After almost seven decades in power, the PRI-government is showing all the social pathology of a regime in an advanced stage of decay. The deadly feuding and chaos are most pronounced at the top. As a French Marxist historian noted of the ruling circles in the period leading up to the fall of the monarchy in 1789, "The dominant class of the Ancien Régime was no longer united in defence of the system that guaranteed its dominance" (Albert Soboul, *The French Revolution, 1787-1799* [1974]). The triumph of the bourgeoisie was preceded by the revolt of the aristocracy, deeply in debt to the bankers and deathly afraid that its prebends and luxuries would soon be cut off. In their last throes, the royalty and nobility engaged in orgies of ostentation and swirling intrigue.

A similar spectacle was provided by the Romanov dynasty as the tsarist regime was on its last legs. Writing of the sybaritic, demented ruling family, its murderous diviner Rasputin and "the whole greedy, insolent and universally hated pack of grand dukes and grand duchesses," Leon Trotsky in his *History of the Russian Revolution* (1930) notes: "Against the purple background of the war, with the roar of the underground tremors clearly audible, the privileged did not for one moment renounce the joys of life; on the contrary, they devoured them greedily. Yet more and more often a skeleton would appear at their banquets and shake the little bones of its fingers." In Mexico today, the skeletons are literally being dug up on the estates of the former ruling families, and the masses are demanding that the Mexican Rasputins be put on trial for the orgy of looting and murder they have unleashed.

In France and Russia, the old regime was an autocratic monarchy, whose rule clashed with the growth of the productive forces, giving rise to a bourgeois revolution in the first case, a workers revolution in the second. The incrustated governing apparatus of Mexico today is a different social formation, an ossified layer derived from the northern landowners who aborted the Mexican Revolution of 1910-17, murdered its most radical leaders, Emiliano Zapata and Pancho Villa, and then held state power for decades in the name of the revolution they had thwarted. Although its origins are distinct, today this "Institutional Revolutionary" governing caste is giving off the same "*fin de régime*" (end of the regime) odor as the aristocratic parasites of the old regime in France and Russia.

The top layers of the state party have increasingly become an ingrown social layer. Traditionally, the PRI maintained its rule through a combination of severe repression of independent worker/peasant movements and cooptation of the leaders to head off any serious challenge to its domination. This also rejuvenated the apparatus with new forces. But as this caste has become more ingrown (the various "families" of the PRI have literally become the second and third generations of the same families) and with the shift to ultra-"free market" economic policies, cutting down on the availability of positions and subsidies to be

distributed through state-owned enterprises, this has meant that the regime has increasingly relied simply on repression. Yet the heavy-handed tactics that worked a generation ago are sometimes counterproductive today.

Meanwhile, the PRI suffered severe setbacks in last November's elections in the state of Mexico, getting only 37 percent of the votes and losing the sprawling "suburban" cities ringing the capital to the opposition (Nezahualcóyotl and Ecatepec to the PRD, Tlalnepantla and Naucalpan to the PAN). In response to this electoral debacle, four days later PRI deputies and senators voted an electoral "reform" law in the national congress over the objections of all the opposition parties. This new law provides for government financing of parties for the next Mexican presidential election to the tune of 2.3 billion pesos (US\$300 million), more than *four times* the amount doled out to parties in the recent U.S. presidential vote. This is obscene in a country where the masses are living a miserable existence, unable to obtain even the basic necessities of food, shelter and transportation.

The purpose of the whole operation is to buy enough votes for the PRI to maintain its control of the state machinery, despite a predictable decline in its fortunes at the polls. Thus in order to ensure "governability," the new electoral law provides that the *two* largest parties will get a larger number of congressional seats than their vote shares—an obvious pitch to the right-wing PAN to maintain its de facto coalition with the PRI. And, in fact, the PAN leaders have been notably quiet over this election law—perhaps figuring that if they score well they will want to reap the benefits.

For years, the vote-rigging techniques of the PRI-government have been legendary: the *carusel* (professional voters going around to many different polling stations); *operación tortilla* (free breakfasts and transportation on the day of the election); hundreds of millions of pesos doled out by government programs like Solidaridad and Procampo just before the voting; mobilizing the worker and peasant unions affiliated to the PRI to bus their members to election rallies and the polls; stuffing ballot boxes in PRI districts, losing ballot boxes in opposition areas—and then through creative vote counting by the *alquimistas* after the polls close, a solid PRI majority would be returned for every post in every district (known as the *carro completo*, or full car). When the vote counting was computerized in 1988, a new technique was added: on election night, after early returns show the opposition gaining, the computers mysteriously crash and after anywhere from several hours to several days of silence, the government obtains a bare majority. The content of the new election laws is that what was accomplished before by corruption and skullduggery in the dead of night is now to be done through the "free market" of buying votes at massive public expense.

But it could backfire badly, as the PRI's last attempt at electoral "reform" did. In 1993, President Carlos Salinas de Gortari decided that he would get around all the complaints over the PRI's traditional campaign practices by getting a kick-back from the billionaires whose sudden wealth sprang from the sell-off at bargain prices of the multitude of government



and "para-state" enterprises privatized during Salinas' regime. As a result of this largesse, by that year *Forbes* magazine listed 24 Mexican billionaires in its ranking of the world's richest men, virtually every one of them a beneficiary of Salinas' handouts. So in order to raise funds for the '94 elections, the PRI money men organized a dinner of a dozen top tycoons, at which the assembled plutocrats made pledges averaging US\$25 million *each*. When word of this gold-plated soirée leaked out it caused an explosion of popular outrage.

The recent book by *Miami Herald* correspondent Andrés Oppenheimer, *Bordering on Chaos: Guerrillas, Stockbrokers, Politicians and Mexico's Road to Prosperity* (Little, Brown, 1996), gives a course-by-course account of this \$25-million-a-plate dinner. But while it reads like a breathless "Lifestyles of Mexico's Rich and Famous," Oppenheimer does capture the flavor of a party which calls itself revolutionary and is a consultative member of the "Socialist (Second) International" at the same time as its leaders are in several cases themselves literally billionaires. Oppenheimer recounts how one of the PRI's old-line bosses (the *dinosaurios*), Manuel Garza of Tamaulipas, entertained an American correspondent by ordering a goat killed in the morning on one of his ranches in that border state and then having it flown by private jet to Mexico City in time to be prepared for dinner in the afternoon. Another of the PRI leaders in the state, Ernesto Gómez Liera, the mayor of Reynosa, owns more than 100,000 hectares. These are some of the leaders of the PRI's *jurásicos*—the "Jurassic Park" wing of the party. They may well soon be extinct, but the process could be cataclysmic.

Already, the feuding in the upper echelons of the governing apparatus has turned bloody. The March 1994 assassination of the PRI candidate for president, Luis Donaldo Colosio, was the first political assassination of a top government figure since former president Alvaro Obregón was slain in 1928. Moreover, it was almost certainly engineered within the party-government apparatus, possibly in response to Colosio's vow in a speech a few weeks earlier to end "authoritarianism" in the government. Key police officials involved in providing security for Colosio or investigating the killing were themselves later gunned down (the latest one, the fifth so far, was of the special investigator in Baja California, at the beginning of January 1997) or mysteriously disappeared. Indications suggested the PRI *dinosaurios* were behind the crime, while much of the population points to former president Salinas himself.

Then, in October 1994, the general secretary of the PRI, José Francisco Ruiz Massieu, was gunned down on the street right in front of the massive party headquarters, an area crawling with cops. There was overwhelming evidence that a PRI mafia, including federal senators and deputies, was behind the shooting. Ruiz Massieu's brother Mario was appointed as spe-



Hector Mateos/Cuartoscuro

**Murderous intrigue at the top: PRI secretary general José Francisco Ruiz Massieu, gunned down in front of party headquarters.**

cial investigator to pursue the case, then quit claiming inquiries were being blocked by top PRI officials. Thereupon, the next special investigator accused Mario Ruiz Massieu of covering up the complicity of Carlos Salinas' older brother Raúl in the murder of Mario's older brother, José Francisco. Raúl Salinas was imprisoned as the alleged mastermind. Now both Raúl Salinas and Mario Ruiz are being investigated for illicit enrichment, a clear sign that a political vendetta is under way, since this could be proved about every PRI government or party official in the country.

The murderous goings-on and financial shenanigans at the top levels of power are the mortal signs of a state apparatus coming apart. Again, the parallels to other dying regimes are striking. From the beginning the main reason for existence of the PRI and its predecessors from the point of view of Mexican capital and its U.S. imperialist backers was that it provided the social peace necessary for profitable exploitation. When it no longer serves this function, the usefulness of this party-government machinery of social control for the ruling class will be at an end. Washington and Wall Street now find Mexican government arbitrariness inconvenient, and a *New York Times* (1 October 1996) editorial on "Mexican Justice" sternly reprimanded Zedillo, lecturing that "unless the rule of law is applied equally to all Mexicans, neither democracy nor free and transparent markets can take root."

The *Times*' sudden concern for justice remains highly selective: the main victims of the PRI-government's murder machinery have always been the opposition, even if only slightly to the left. When more than 500 left-wing youth and peasants were killed or "disappeared" during Mexico's "dirty war" against guerrillas in the 1970s, U.S. counterinsurgency advisors helped organize this slaughter. More recently, there hasn't been a peep from Washington about the continual murders of members of the "center-left" Party of the Democratic Revolution: over 350 party members were killed during Salinas' reign and 150 so far in

Zedillo's first two years, according to PRD leader Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas (*La Jornada*, 19 November 1996).

Since Cárdenas left the PRI to run in the 1988 presidential elections, the PRD has served as the linchpin for a "popular front" whose purpose is to subordinate mass discontent among the workers, peasants and middle class to this bourgeois party. In preparation for the 1997 elections, last summer the PRD elected as its leader the former gubernatorial candidate in the state of Tabasco, Andrés López Obrador, who in 1995 led a march on the capital demanding annulment of the fraudulent state election and last year led peasant sit-ins at the Pemex installations in the Gulf Coast oil state. Speaking at a November 20 celebration of the anniversary of the Mexican Revolution in the newly PRD-governed city of Nezhualcóyotl, López Obrador said the party would campaign for wage increases, jobs and social justice, denouncing the PRI as "anti-nationalist" and "neo-liberal." But at the same time as its leader was mouthing populist phrases, the PRD leadership offered to form a "broad opposition front" with the rightist PAN (*La Jornada*, 30 November 1996). During December, a series of state PRI leaders went over to the PRD and were promptly named as candidates. This wave of switchovers underlines the character of the PRD as a new PRI.

### Peasant Guerrillas Spread

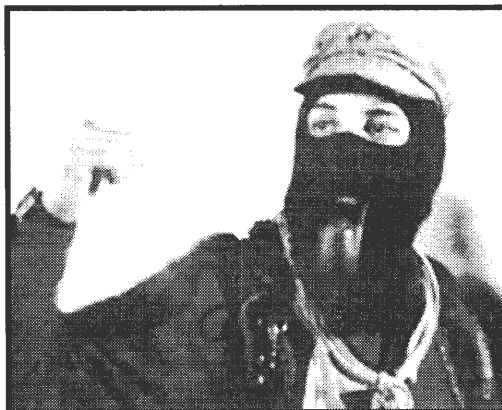
January 1 was the third anniversary of the uprising led by the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) in the poor southern Mexican state of Chiapas. The Zapatistas' "Declaration of the Lacandon Forest" proclaimed they were fighting to "depose the dictator" Salinas and against "a dictatorship of more than 70 years duration headed by a camarilla of traitors." Their goals were "jobs, land, housing, food, health, education, independence, democracy, justice and peace." Based on initial statements to the press by EZLN spokesman Subcomandante Marcos, the rebellion was widely portrayed as a revolt against the North American Free Trade Agreement, which went into effect the same day. The rebels published a series of "revolutionary laws" to be imposed in liberated territories, including a Revolutionary Agrarian Law calling for the seizure and distribution of all landholdings over 50 hectares to the landless peasantry and agricultural laborers, to be worked collectively (*EZLN: Documentos y comunicados*, Ediciones Era, 1994).

The Zapatista revolt sent shock waves throughout Mexico and around the world. It was a blow against a U.S.-dominated New World Order, and awakened tremendous sympathy among the workers, peasants and sectors of the petty bourgeoisie who had been reeling for a dozen years under the austerity policies imposed by Wall Street banks and implemented by Harvard-trained economists, which produced fabulous wealth for a handful of Salinas cronies and misery for millions. The bloody

slaughter by the army in the ten days of fighting caused mass revulsion, as hundreds were killed, a number of them executed in classic death squad style with their thumbs tied behind their backs. Hundreds of thousands poured into the streets marching for "peace," leading Salinas to order a ceasefire rather than risk a social eruption throughout the country.

The conditions the Mayan Indian peasants rebelled against were and still are horrific. Salinas' agrarian counterreform has already led to tens of thousands of peasants losing their land,

while several million have fled the countryside to the cities desperately seeking work. As a result, Mexico's food production has fallen drastically. In 1995, Mexico imported roughly 14 million tons of basic grains. This amount represents almost half of Mexico's food consumption, in an agricultural country which until recently was largely self-sufficient in basic foods and a major exporter of agricultural produce to the U.S. With price supports for corn removed, most small peasants cannot afford to produce the food that has been the



La Jornada

**EZLN Subcomandante Marcos**

country's basic staple since before the Spanish conquest. Last year six million tons were imported from the U.S., much of it low-grade fodder which is then sold to humans.

In addition, due to falling real incomes, in the year and a half following the December 1994 peso devaluation, the actual consumption of basic foods in Mexico fell by a staggering 29 percent, even as the population continued to rise. Today, one out of every two Mexicans consumes less than the 2,430 calories a day minimum established by the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Health Organization. Every year, roughly 158,000 Mexican children under five die of illnesses related to undernourishment. Malnutrition has become outright hunger.

The Mexican countryside is seething with discontent. Conditions have become so explosive that the head of the pro-government union of agricultural workers, Alvaro López Ríos, recently stated that the combination of NAFTA with Salinas' agrarian counterreform under which modern latifundios are buying up agricultural land wholesale is provoking "a peasant insurrection similar to that which occurred at the time of Porfirio Díaz"—i.e., at the time of the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1917. López Ríos noted "the appearance of an increasing number of armed groups of peasants who in desperation are staking everything on guerrilla action." He reports that peasants have had it with the government, and "if more Subcomandante Marcoses would appear, this country would embark on a new Revolution. And although I don't think this is right, perhaps it is necessary" (*Proceso*, 29 December 1995).

The international press has focused on the Zapatista Indian uprising in Chiapas, but the unrest extends far beyond the rainforest regions in the ravines along the border with Guatemala. In the rest of this state, the poorest in Mexico, there have been nu-



merous land invasions. Some have been led by the Emiliano Zapata Proletarian Peasant Organization (OCPEZ), others by the Independent Federation of Agricultural Workers and Peasants (CIOAC), and some by traditionally PRI-dominated peasant groups like the OCEZ. In the fall, thousands of peasants belonging to the relatively better-off Corn Producers Association blocked highways in Chiapas for a week to protest prices so low they can't afford to plant. The federal army has now been dispatched to the Chiapas Highlands region and the northern part of the state, and during the summer and fall there were almost daily reports of peasants killed by joint actions of the federal army, state judicial police and the landowners' "white guards."

That is in the far south. Just to the north, in Oaxaca, the army was put on red alert a year ago, intensively patrolling the Zapotec Indian regions of the sierra along the Pacific coast and the Mixtec areas along the border with the state of Guerrero. This was months before the Revolutionary People's Army (EPR) came down from the hills at the end of August to attack a town near the tourist area of Huatulco. Meanwhile, in the mountainous Huasteca region of the central states of Veracruz, Puebla, Hidalgo and San Luis Potosí, militants of the Emiliano Zapata Democratic Eastern Front (FEDOMEZ) have been subjected to heavy persecution by army units occupying at least 20 municipalities in the eastern cordillera. The army claims that FEDOMEZ and other peasant groups are simply fronts for guerrillas active in the area.

But the biggest recent army deployment has been in the Pacific coast state of Guerrero, where the Revolutionary People's Army announced its existence last summer. On June 28 an armed detachment of uniformed EPR guerrillas attended a ceremony in the hamlet of Aguas Blancas honoring the 17 peasant supporters of the Peasant Organization of the South Sierra (OCSS) who were ambushed and assassinated there the year before by the state police. Arriving just as Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas was leaving the platform, the guerrillas read their "Declaration of Aguas Blancas," fired off 17 shots before the TV cameras, and headed back into the hills. When Cárdenas referred to the guerrillas' armed propaganda action as a "pantomime," this description was repeated by government spokesmen. But at the end of August, EPR guerrillas struck simultaneously against police and army outposts and electrical power installations in at least six states. In response, the army arrested virtually the entire male population of the town of San Agustín Loxicha in rural Oaxaca.

With the Zedillo government nervous about its international image and wary of cracking down heavily for fear of an explosion of opposition in the capital, the EPR guerrillas have been able to stage low-level attacks on police stations, isolated military vehicles and the like, as well as holding clandestine press conferences in several locations, including the capital. In the propaganda war, the government has been painting the new guerrilla group as a front for the PROCUP (Clandestine Revolutionary Workers Party-Union of the People), a shadowy Maoist-derived group that has been around since the 1970s and which during the '80s staged a series of bombings in Mexico City, some against banks but others against middle-class restaurants. The

latter indiscriminate, nationalist terror actions, and the kidnapping in the mid-1980s of the head of the Mexican United Socialist Party by the PROCUP-allied Party of the Poor, left over from Lucio Cabañas 1960s guerrilla group in Guerrero, are utterly indefensible acts in no way directed against the capitalist ruling class or imperialism.

But even the army's "counterinsurgency" experts and their U.S. advisors are well aware that a guerrilla group would not have been able to undertake repeated harassing actions and sustain itself for months without a significant degree of local support. The government's immediate response to the Aguas Blancas action by the EPR in June was to arrest most of the leaders of the OCSS, which has a mass base in that region, while in the Huastecas the army has gone after the FEDOMEZ. Moreover, the previous year the magazine *Proceso* (7 August 1995) published a military intelligence report on the activities of a number of "subversive" groups in the state of Guerrero. Among them were, in addition to PROCUP, the Army of Liberation of the Southern Sierra, the Revolutionary Popular Movement, the Chilpancingo Insurgent Army, the Clandestine Armed Forces, and the Southern Liberation Army, each with different areas of influence. The EPR describes itself as the armed wing of a Popular Democratic Revolutionary Party (PDPR) formed by 14 groups.

The EZLN, meanwhile, has a genuine mass base among the various indigenous peoples of Chiapas, with representatives of the Tzotzil, Tzeltal, Chole and other Mayan groups. Even a critical account based on police and military intelligence reports, Carlos Tello Díaz' book, *La rebelión de las Cañadas* (Cal y Arena, 1995), makes it clear that the January 1994 uprising involved thousands of Indian peasants who had been forced from their lands years earlier by PRI-connected landlords, and was the product of more than a decade of organizing activities by former members of one of the failed "Marxist-Leninist" guerrilla groups of the 1970s. Marxists defend the leftist guerrillas against government repression, demanding that all accused supporters of the EPR and EZLN as well as the arrested peasant leaders be freed, while at the same time warning that the petty-bourgeois strategy of guerrillaism is a dead end.

There is a great variety of guerrilla strategies—the Guevarist *foco* (focal point), which held that a small group of determined fighters from the outside could spark a conflagration; the Maoist "prolonged people's war," modeled on the peasant-based Chinese Red Army of the 1930s; the Vietnamese combination of regular army and guerrilla forces; various "national liberation" struggles in the 1960s; "peasant republics" in Colombia, isolated pockets that have existed sometimes for decades; "urban guerrillas" such as the Uruguayan Tupamaros and in Brazil; the examples of Nicaragua and El Salvador in the 1970s and '80s, where guerrilla groups were linked to peasant-based mass organizations at the same time as they made popular-front alliances with dissident bourgeois sectors. But all these variants share a number of features in common.

First, they are all fundamentally based on petty-bourgeois layers, primarily the peasantry. Second, they consist of the organization of armed units separate from mass movements of



**EPR guerrillas announce their existence at June 1996 demonstration for 17 leftist peasants murdered by Guerrero state police.**

the working people. Third, they have a bonapartist internal organization along military lines. Despite the frequent references to Marxism-Leninism, such movements are necessarily *fundamentally counterposed* to the program of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky, which looks to the organization of the proletariat, as a class conscious of its historic interests, under the leadership of its revolutionary party, to wage the battles of the class struggle through to a socialist revolution.

Peasant-based guerrillaism is a petty-bourgeois strategy incompatible with the class organization of the workers. The fundamental source of strength of the proletariat is its strategic position at the heart of the capitalist economy. While guerrilla tactics can be a subordinate element in a civil war, this cannot be a strategy for socialist revolution. Marxists seek to organize the workers' class struggle culminating in a mass proletarian-led insurrection, drawing in other oppressed sectors (such as the peasant and urban poor) behind the working class led by its revolutionary party.

The program of many leftist-tinged guerrilla groups is often derived from the Stalinist conception of a "revolution in stages": first (bourgeois) democracy, later (never) for socialism. This "democratic," non-socialist program is aimed at winning over a peasant and urban petty-bourgeois base, whose fundamental aspiration is not for a collectivized economy but to themselves become property owners. Yet the peasants' oppression is not some offshoot of feudalism, as the Stalinists claim, but a direct product of capitalism in the economically backward countries. Key factors in the EZLN uprising, for example, were the falling prices on the world coffee market, together with the government's land "reform" policies, etc.

In this respect, it is curious to note that a recent issue of *Workers Vanguard* (No. 657, 6 December 1996), the newspaper of the Spartacist League, in a polemic directed against the Internationalist Group, twice claims that Latin American peasants are subjected to the remnants of feudalism. The article refers to the need for "the destruction of feudal peonage in the countryside

which continue[s] to plague the countries of Latin America." Yet peonage in the vast majority of the continent has been the product of the capitalist economy. Moreover, the *WV* article's reference to "the inheritance of Spanish feudal colonialism" in Latin America also reveals a fundamental misunderstanding. Spanish colonialism was from the outset marked by a combined character, in which feudal and even pre-feudal forms of servitude were used in the interests of production for the capitalist market, just as slavery in the American South (producing "King Cotton" largely for export) was an instrument in building a capitalist economy. The myth of Latin American "feudalism," now repeated by the Spartacist League, was invented by the Stalinized Communist parties to justify their stagist politics.

The intermittent popularity of guerrillaism on the Latin American left and elsewhere in the economically backward capitalist countries in past decades is a reflection of the destructive impact of Stalinism in undermining and perverting the Leninist program of *international socialist revolution*. Stalinism was the ideology of the petty-bourgeois bureaucratic layer which usurped political power from the Soviet working class and its Bolshevik Party in 1923-24, betrayed the internationalist program of the October Revolution and ultimately prepared the way for the social counter-revolution that swept away the Soviet bloc degenerated and deformed workers states in 1989-92. Stalin's conservative nationalist dogma of "*socialism in one country*" was a denial of the basic Marxist understanding that socialism can only be international in scope, including the most advanced capitalist countries. It made into a program the mood of defeat produced by the failure of the German Revolution of 1923 and the national isolation of the young Soviet workers state.

Stalinism reflected a fundamental lack of confidence in the revolutionary capacity of the proletariat, the hallmark of all anti-Marxist revisionism. In desperately searching for petty-bourgeois and ultimately bourgeois allies, it was entirely within the logic of Stalinism that some of its variants could embrace peasant-based guerrillaism, giving a "militant" flavor to what is really a program of defeatism. The multiplicity of "M-L" guerrilla groups in the 1960s was a corollary of the belief that the working class in the imperialist countries was "bought off," or otherwise incapable of revolutionary action—a view that was powerfully refuted by the French May 1968. It is also characteristic that when a revisionist current, Pabloism, made deep inroads in the Trotskyist movement in the 1950s, leading to the destruction of the Fourth International, it eventually hailed petty-bourgeois guerrilla movements in Cuba, Algeria and Vietnam as "new vanguards," a substitute for the necessary proletarian vanguard party.

The Revolutionary Tendency of the Socialist Workers Party in the U.S. in the early 1960s summed up the fight against this anti-Trotskyist revisionism in a series of theses titled, "To-

ward Rebirth of the Fourth International" (June 1963), which stated in part:

"Experience since the Second World War has demonstrated that peasant-based guerrilla warfare under petit-bourgeois leadership can in itself lead to nothing more than an anti-working-class bureaucratic regime. The creation of such regimes has come about under the conditions of decay of imperialism, the demoralization and disorientation caused by Stalinist betrayals, and the absence of revolutionary Marxist leadership of the working class. Colonial revolution can have an unequivocally progressive significance only under such leadership of the revolutionary proletariat. For Trotskyists to incorporate into their strategy revisionism on the *proletarian* leadership in the revolution is a profound negation of Marxism-Leninism, no matter what pious wish may be concurrently expressed for 'building revolutionary Marxist parties in colonial countries.' Marxists must resolutely oppose any adventurist acceptance of the peasant-guerrilla road to socialism—historically akin to the Social Revolutionary program on tactics that Lenin fought. This alternative would be a suicidal course for the socialist goals of the movement, and perhaps physically for the adventurers."

The RT's struggle for authentic Trotskyism led to the formation of the international Spartacist tendency, later the International Communist League, a struggle the Internationalist Group continues today.

Guerrillaism has always been a defeatist program, but in the 1990s, under the impact of the destruction of the Soviet Union, its proponents and practitioners don't even pretend to call for socialism, only for (bourgeois) democracy. EZLN spokesman Marcos is explicit about this, commenting in one interview:

"The directorate of our army has never spoken about Cuban or Soviet socialism. We have always spoken about the basic rights of the human: education, housing health, food, land, good pay for our work, democracy. All of our thoughts about the workers and campesinos and the revolution are taken from the Mexican revolutionary heroes Flores Magón, Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata."

—quoted in Philip L. Russel, *The Chiapas Rebellion* (Mexico Resource Center, 1995)

Mexican essayist and liberal political scientist Jorge Castañeda has described the EZLN ideology as *armed reformism*, for they accept the capitalist market as the dominant economic institution. This is incontrovertibly true. Indeed, many of those who have hailed the Zapatistas as the harbinger of "progressive" movements of the '90s make this into a positive virtue. Thus various trendy academic authors have called the EZLN uprising "the first post-modern rebellion," meaning that it does not call for social revolution and confines itself to reforms.

Moreover, even the talk of reforms is disappearing as the EZLN's on-again, off-again "negotiations" with the government have gone nowhere. The Zapatista leaders have whittled down their initial propositions, and are functioning as an armed pressure group. So far they have only obtained the abstract agreement of the government team to a statute of "autonomy" for the indigenous peoples, which under the rule of capitalism cannot stop the continued de-

struction of the Indian communities through the relentless pressure of market forces. The Zapatistas' "revolutionary agrarian law" is long forgotten.

Instead, the EZLN leaders are looking for political "confluence" with various bourgeois forces, dubbed "civil society," embracing Cárdenas and the PRD, signing on various liberal intellectuals from the well-off San Angel restaurant set as Zapatista advisors, proclaiming unity with the small businessmen and farmers of the El Barzón debtors' movement. The EZLN stages Woodstock-like "happenings" in the rain forest for Zapatourists: intercontinental conferences against "neo-liberalism," gatherings for Indian rights, round table discussions on "reform of the state," all starring the ultimate showman, *el sup* Marcos with his signature ski mask and pipe.

After various false starts in setting up a civilian front (the National Democratic Convention, the National Liberation Movement), it is now proposing to dissolve its forces into a Zapatista National Liberation Front (FZLN) that will operate exclusively on the terrain of bourgeois pressure politics. Thus the EZLN's "Fourth Declaration of the Lacandon Forest" calls for a "civilian and peaceful political force, independent and democratic, Mexican and national, that fights for democracy, freedom and justice." It proclaims the intention of building "a political force which does not struggle to take political power."

The Zapatistas' frank statement of sub-reformist intent, their willing subordination to the exigencies of empty discussions with the government and signing of "agreements" devoid of substance has led to some discontent among their urban supporters. So what of the EPR, which the government is now portraying as the "bad guerrillas" as opposed to the "good guerrillas" of the EZLN? "We are seeking power. We will not dialogue with a government of killers," said EPR commander José Arturo in an interview with reporters (*La Jornada*, 9 August 1996). Yet the EPR leader "studiously avoided the word 'socialism' during the interview," as Mexico-based radical journalist John Ross noted (*México Bárbaro*, 15 August 1996). The EPR/PDPR's program is a hodge-podge of, at most, radical-democratic demands (cancellation of the foreign debt, nationalization of major U.S. corporations), calls for alliances with "progressive and democratic personalities, to unite all forms of struggle in the revolutionary democratic struggle," culminating in a change of the present "anti-social" economic policy and a "people's democratic republic," defined as "the establishment of a new government essentially distinct from that which today holds power" (from the EPR "Manifesto of Aguas Blancas").

Decked out with more traditional leftist rhetoric than the EZLN and a "no negotiations" posture, that could nevertheless be the program of a *bourgeois* party a bit to the left of Cárdenas' and López Obrador's Party of the Democratic Revolution. This is counterposed to the liberation of the working class and oppressed Indians, peasants and urban poor who suffer not only under an "anti-social" or "neo-liberal" economic policy, but under the ravishes of the *capitalist system* which lives off exploitation of their toil.

[WILL CONTINUE NEXT ISSUE]



## Leftists, Unionists Face Death Sentence in "Subversion" Trials

# Free Victims of Rightist Repression in Indonesia!

Indonesian leftists and trade unionists are now on trial for "subversion," and could face the death penalty if convicted. Their arrests are part of the brutal repression by the Suharto military dictatorship following massive anti-government protests last July. Among those charged are Muchtar Pakpahan, head of the SBSI (Indonesian Workers for Prosperity Union) and Dita Sari, the 22-year-old leader of the PPBI (Center for Labor Struggle). The two union bodies are both banned by the government. Also being tried are Budiman Sujatmiko, chairman of the People's Democratic Party (PRD), to which the PPBI is affiliated, along with ten other PRD activists.

The current round of repression began in early July with government attacks on demonstrations by workers and students led by the PPBI in the city of Surabaya, Java, who were demanding an increase in the minimum wage (presently about US\$12 a week) and democratic rights. On July 27, a government-instigated assault on the headquarters of the tame bourgeois opposition party, PDI, provoked mass anti-government protests. Scores of supporters of PDI leader Megawati Sukarnoputri were picked up by the police in the subsequent crackdown. In late November, 124 PDI supporters were released, while labor and left-wing activists are now facing the threat of execution.

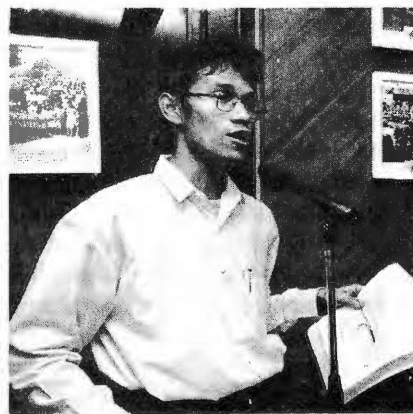
The bloody Suharto regime has always ruled through massive repression and with the backing of U.S. imperialism. It took the reins of power in 1965 by carrying out the slaughter of a million supporters of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). Seizing the former Portuguese colony of East Timor in 1975, the Indonesian military unleashed a terror of genocidal proportions, killing an estimated 200,000 people on this tiny island. And by striking hard against any unions

independent of the government, it has ensured "labor peace" for sweatshop bosses like Nike footwear, Guess Jeans and Mattel toys, who make superprofits from the toil of young, mainly women workers in Indonesia.

In recent years, notably in the mass strikes in the Sumatran industrial city of Medan in 1994, Indonesian workers are beginning to rebel. Illegal independent union organizations are spreading in the wake of the considerable growth of industry. However, in the name of "democratization," the leaders of both the SBSI and the PPBI tail the bourgeois opposition led by Megawati, the daughter of the nationalist Sukarno, who led Indonesia until he was ousted by Suharto in 1965. The PKI's treacherous policy of class collaboration subordinated the working masses to Sukarno, leading to disaster. *It must not happen again!* In the struggle to bring down Suharto's "New Order," Indonesian workers must fight for socialist revolution, while unconditionally supporting independence for East Timor.

Many activists and solidarity groups, in Indonesia and internationally, appeal to the American government to pressure the Jakarta regime into "democratizing." Yet Washington has been behind every repressive move by Suharto. The 1965 coup was directed by the CIA, which supplied pick-up lists of Communists, was prepared by the U.S. Army's training of thousands of Indonesian officers, and braintrusted by American academics from the University of California/Berkeley. A decade later Henry Kissinger gave the green light to the invasion of East Timor.

The ties of Indonesia's capitalist rulers to the Clinton administration became notorious last fall, when Republicans made a scandal of the half a million dollars donated to the Democrats by the Riady family and its Lippo Group. Meanwhile, giant U.S. corporations with invest-



Economist

### PRD leader Budiman Sujatmiko

ments in Indonesia, including Mobil Oil and General Electric, have shaped the U.S.' pro-Suharto policy for decades.

The imperialists and their Indonesian junior partners are the enemies of working people everywhere, who must mobilize their own forces to save the lives and win freedom for the courageous leftists and unionists now on trial, as well as for the fighters for Timorese independence who languish in Indonesian jails. Events are moving rapidly: charges were filed on December 4, the trials began on December 12, and on December 30 a court ruled against an appeal by Pakpahan's lawyers. It is urgent for supporters of union and democratic rights to protest *now* against the brutal repression in Indonesia.

In addition to protest messages, it is necessary to mobilize the power of labor in this effort. Since September, the Australian Maritime Union has launched sporadic actions in a "rolling ban" against Indonesian ships, briefly delaying (for up to 24 hours) a total of 13 ships by mid-December. The actions of the militant Australian waterfront workers should be escalated and generalized internationally.

The workers movement must demand *freedom for all victims of right-wing repression in Indonesia*. Protest statements can be sent by fax to the Indonesian Minister of Justice, Uahi Utoyo Usman, at (62-21) 525-3095; and to the Indonesian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ali Alatas, at (62-21) 380-5511. In Britain, protests can be sent to the Indonesian Embassy, 38 Grosvenor Square, London W 1. And in the U.S., send protests to: Embassy of Indonesia, 2020 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, D.C. 20036, or phone (202) 775-5200. ■

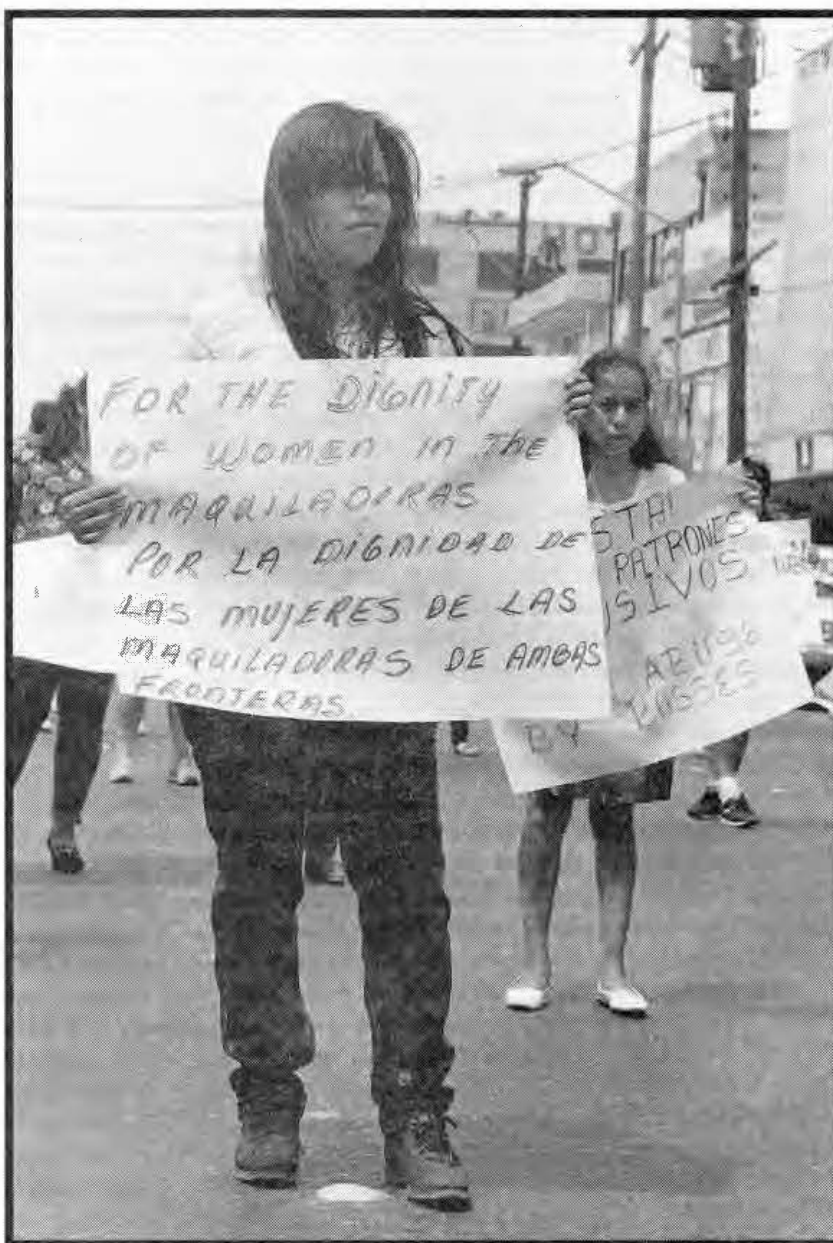
From Tijuana to Matamoros

# Mexican Maquiladora Workers Fight for Their Rights

Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution

Rebellion has been brewing among the more than half a million industrial workers in the maquiladora (free trade zone) factories strung out along Mexico's northern border. The plants are mainly owned by U.S. companies (as well as the leading Japanese conglomerates). The workforce is young, mostly under 25 years old, and predominantly women. Following the December 1994 peso devaluation, which slashed Mexican workers' real wages in half, the rest of Mexico's industry has been crippled. But paying starvation wages and producing almost exclusively for the North American market, the maquiladoras are booming—and for the first time, there have been a number of relatively successful strikes. A battle to unionize this new industrial belt is looming, which poses the need for a revolutionary leadership that champions the cause of oppressed women workers.

On May Day 1995, more than a thousand workers marched in Tijuana. Signs denounced control of the "unions" by the official party, the PRI, which has used its rigid control of labor to impose brutal austerity policies dictated by Wall Street and Washington. Other placards demanded, "Traitorous and Cowardly Mexican Army Get Out of Chiapas!" where 40,000 Mexican troops are encircling the Zapatista Indian rebels. But most striking was the active participation in the protest by workers in the maquiladora factories. Without union protection, subject to employers' whims and the tight control of company security and police forces, simply to march was a courageous act of defiance by these mainly women workers. Moreover, maquiladora workers from Tijuana to Matamoros joined May Day protests while hundreds of thousands jammed into Mexico City's Zócalo, the capital's main square, after the government-controlled CTM "labor" federation called off its traditional



David Bacon/Impact Visuals

**Women workers of Tijuana maquiladora demonstrate on May Day 1995 against sexual harassment by bosses.**

parade, fearing it could turn into a full-scale revolt against the PRI and its heavy-handed "labor" bureaucracy.

In the Tijuana demonstration, women carried signs demanding dignity for women in the maquiladoras. They were among the more than a hundred workers at the Exportadora de Mano de Obra S.A. (Emosa) plant who were protesting sexual harassment at the plant, where they inspect and repair rubber sealing rings for the U.S. aerospace, auto and electronics industry. Sexual abuse is rampant in these plants, which employ predominantly female labor: of the 100,000 maquiladora workers in Tijuana, an estimated 80 percent are women. Free trade zone assembly and light manufacturing plants have traditionally employed women on the grounds that they are supposed to be more dexterous, docile and above all less likely to organize independent unions. That is changing, as the Emosa workers' actions show. But the employers are raking in huge profits based on superexploitation of low-wage labor. So when workers brought charges against Emosa, the company's U.S. owner, American United Global/National O-Ring, closed the plant, firing the entire work force.

The fight at Emosa grew out of a company picnic in September 1994, where the president of the California-based parent corporation, John Shahid, demanded that the women workers perform a bikini show, which he videotaped. According to the women, Shahid told them how to move as his camera focused on the waist down. When they later confronted him at a plant meeting, demanding a wage increase and that the videotape be turned over to them, he threw down \$15, saying that was their "raise," and said what he wanted in return was "amor" (love). The workers filed a complaint with the Mexican labor board, and brought criminal charges in a Tijuana court. Company executives refused to appear, and shortly after shut the plant. Stymied there, the Emosa workers, with the aid of the San Diego-based Support Committee for Maquiladora Workers, sued the U.S. owners in Los Angeles court for sexual harassment, illegal firing, nonpayment of back wages and denial of severance pay. In October 1995, American United Global settled the suit out of court for a reported \$500,000.

Over the last several years, particularly in response to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which went into effect in January 1994, a number of liberal and labor activist groups have begun or stepped up cross-border solidarity campaigns with Mexican workers. The Emosa settlement is being hailed in these circles as a major victory, pointing to the possibility of appealing to U.S. courts for redress against violations of Mexican labor laws by subsidiaries of American companies. Whatever the evaluation of the Emosa settlement (the terms are secret), it should be clear that U.S. courts are no friends of women workers. Almost simultaneously, a complaint brought by workers at Sony's Magnéticos de México plants in Nuevo Laredo for flagrantly violating Mexican labor laws was dismissed by the National Administrative Office in San Antonio, an arbitration body set up under NAFTA to hear labor disputes. North and south of the border, the courts are the "legal" instruments of capital against labor and the oppressed. Their job is to enforce the bourgeois laws—or not enforce them,

if that better serves the interests of the ruling class.

In fact, the major pressure on the O-ring manufacturer to settle in the Emosa case reportedly came from a solidarity committee of United Auto Workers Region 1-A, which wrote to the company's board of directors that contracts with the Big Three auto companies require suppliers to be "good corporate citizens," and hinted that the UAW might push GM, Ford and Chrysler to switch suppliers. There were also several demonstrations by Emosa workers and supporters outside American United Global's headquarters in Downey, California. This is an example of the "corporate campaigns" that have become popular lately among sections of the labor bureaucracy, mainly as a phony "alternative" to strike action. Yet giant companies are not going to be defeated by revelations that they flunked some "corporate citizenship" standard. Real solidarity with Mexican workers requires more than a just letter on union stationery. What's needed is not appeals to corporate "conscience" or looking to the bosses' courts, but hard class struggle on both sides of the border.

That struggle must be guided by proletarian, internationalist and revolutionary principles. Thus recently, campaigns against sweatshop labor in Central American maquilas have been linked to demands that U.S. companies not buy from plants in those countries, or that the plants be shut down. Such demands reflect the *protectionism* of the labor bureaucracy, who just want a better deal, a "social contract" with companies that are "good (U.S.) corporate citizens." The opposition of the U.S. union bureaucracy to NAFTA is fundamentally *national-chauvinist*. That is why official labor support for Mexican workers is queasy and minimal at best, when it isn't outright appeals to racist xenophobia, such as the campaign by Teamster union tops against Mexican truck drivers. Their complaints (open or veiled) about foreign workers "stealing American jobs" express their own support for *American capitalism*. Genuine support for Mexican, Central American, Filipino and Japanese workers, often working for the very same corporations, requires solidarity in militant union *action*, not exercises in pressure politics.

Moreover, while the Emosa case involved a U.S. company that fled from Mexico when challenged by its workers, appeals to U.S. courts can be a dangerous and double-edged tactic. As part of its pretensions of imperialist hegemony in a New World Order, Washington has enacted or simply decreed a number of measures claiming the international applicability of U.S. laws. The reactionary Helms-Burton law proclaims this doctrine of extraterritoriality to enforce the counterrevolutionary U.S. trade embargo against Cuba on Mexican, Canadian and European companies. In the mid-1980s, under Ronald Reagan, U.S. authorities kidnapped a Mexican doctor and flew him to California for trial on charges of involvement in the killing of a Drug Enforcement Agency operative in Guadalajara. Rather than looking to the U.S. bosses' laws and courts, class-conscious workers must appeal to U.S. and Mexican workers for joint struggle against the common class enemy.

The sexual harassment and abuse of workers at Emosa is only the tip of the iceberg as concerns the oppression of women



under capitalism. "Beauty contests" are frequent in Tijuana-area maquiladoras, encouraged by the chamber of commerce as a diversion for women workers—along with company-sponsored sports teams for the men. And it is standard procedure for maquiladora operators all along the border to administer pregnancy tests to female job applicants as well as women employees, in order to escape from the provisions of Mexico's labor code, which provides for three months paid maternity leave and protection of pregnant women from dangerous tasks. This practice is extensively documented in a report by the Human Rights Watch Women's Rights Project, "No Guarantees: Sex Discrimination in Mexico's Maquiladora Sector" (August 1996). During the three-month probationary period, it is common for free trade zone companies to require women employees to show a company nurse their bloody sanitary napkins as proof of menstruation, and even submit to intrusive physical examination to prove that they are not pregnant (these practices are discussed in the article "Mexican Women Workers Arise: Class Struggle in the 'Global Sweatshop,'" *Women and Revolution* No. 34, Spring 1988).

Even more abusive is the companies' deliberate mistreatment of pregnant women workers, subjecting them to dangerous chemical fumes and ordering them to undertake onerous tasks in order to force them to resign. A notorious case that was widely reported in the Mexican press was that of María Elena Corona Caldero, who worked at the Plásticos Bajacal factory in Tijuana. When she became pregnant in 1989 and asked for seated work she was refused; a few weeks later when she began bleeding during her shift, a supervisor refused to let her go to the hospital and she had a miscarriage while working at the conveyor line. María Elena's case was one of the motivating factors behind a drive to organize an independent union at Plásticos Bajacal. But although it was financially supported by several U.S. unions, the vote lost to a government-controlled "union" which joined with company goons in "monitoring" the ballots by watching how each worker cast their ballot.

The Human Rights Watch report states, "Women repeatedly expressed unwillingness to challenge discriminatory practices in the maquiladoras, given the lack of other comparable employment opportunities." The weight of the many-sided oppression of impoverished women, the conservatizing pressure of the family and the desperate struggle to provide for their children (many of the young women are single mothers), certainly place enormous obstacles in the way of women fully participating in social struggle. But the report's repeated claim—at least six times in the first dozen pages—that women won't fight against sexual harassment is belied by the experience of the Emosa and Plásticos Bajacal workers in Tijuana, by the women workers at Sony in Nuevo Laredo who were brutally beaten by police as they struck against CTM "union" scabherders in 1994, by women workers at Zenith in Reynosa who struck a decade earlier. The idea that maquiladora workers can't win was dramatically disproved by the strike and plant occupation by workers at the RCA Thomson electronics plants in Ciudad Juárez in January 1995. Fundamentally, the claim that women won't fight is an excuse to justify the human

rights organization's liberal appeal to companies and the U.S. and Mexican governments to desist from discriminatory practices.

The fight to unionize the predominantly female work force of the border industries cannot be limited to the "traditional" demands of simple trade unionism. The struggle against the abysmal wages (workers typically earn \$35 for a 48-hour, six-day workweek) means directly taking on the Mexican government and its Yankee imperialist patrons, for whom the super-exploitation of maquiladora workers is a key part of their economic policies. In a two-part article on "Labor Organizing in the Maquiladoras" in *Workers Vanguard* (Nos. 620 and 621, 7 and 21 April 1995), based on a trip to the Nuevo Laredo-Reynosa-Matamoros area, we stressed that "the woman question is in fact *central* to the *maquiladoras*," and that "a class-struggle opposition cannot be limited to economic demands, but must respond to all forms of oppression, notably of women."

There must be conscious and aggressive defense of women against the pervasive sexual harassment and discrimination, demanding an end to all pregnancy tests. A strike begun over the firing or attempt to force the resignation of a pregnant woman worker could have an electrifying effect all along the border. It is necessary to fight for free, 24-hour day care services. At the same time, the struggle for the liberation of women requires a fight for free abortion on demand, which will immediately confront the most reactionary forces in the form of the Catholic church hierarchy and the clerical-derived Partido de Acción Nacional (PAN).

It is also necessary to take on environmental questions from a class standpoint: the newsletter of the Support Committee for Maquiladora Workers reports on a conference of 160 workers from 70 maquiladoras in Baja California where it was reported that in a three-month period earlier this year, four women at one of the worst plants had anencephalic births (babies born without brains) and there were eight to ten miscarriages a month, directly related to hazardous working conditions and exposure to toxins. Elected workers safety committees must be formed with the power to stop production when dangerous conditions are present.

A successful struggle to unionize these young and predominantly female workers who are strategically placed along the U.S.-Mexico border will not be carried out by business unionists who play by the rules of the bosses' laws. It will require the leadership of a party committed to a program of struggle against the exploiters in every domain. The fight against women's oppression is not a "secondary" issue but a strategic part of the fight of the working class for its emancipation. Stressing the significance of the integration of women into social labor, the early Communist International under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky put forward theses on "Forms and Methods of Communist Work Among Women" calling to "take seriously the organization of the broad masses of working women for revolutionary struggle" as the only road to achieving true equality. Today as well, a revolutionary workers party must be forged to lead the fight for *women's liberation through socialist revolution*. ■

## Introduction...

*continued from page 2*

Faced with the consequences of their class collaboration, the reformist left today lies prostrate, together with the centrists who languish in its shadow. We say to the most class-conscious workers and fighters for the oppressed that their fight must be for *world socialist revolution*, for the alternative that threatens the future of humanity is nuclear war and barbarism. What is needed to lead that struggle is centrally a revolutionary vanguard party of the working class, a party built on the model of the Russian Bolsheviks. The central goal of *The Internationalist* is to be an instrument in building such a party.

We base ourselves in this undertaking on the lessons of the past history of the communist movement. In his seminal work, "Where to Begin?" written in 1901, Lenin laid out the essential tasks of a revolutionary press organ:

"The role of a newspaper, however, is not limited solely to the dissemination of ideas, to political education, and to the enlistment of political allies. A newspaper is not only a collective propagandist and a collective agitator, it is also a collective organiser.... With the aid of the newspaper, and through it, a permanent organisation will naturally take shape that will engage, not only in local activities, but in regular general work, and will train its members to follow political events carefully, appraise their significance and their effect on the various strata of the population, and develop effective means for the revolutionary party to influence those events."

Elaborating on this conception in his pamphlet *What Is to Be Done?* (1902), Lenin noted that "a basic condition for the necessary expansion of political agitation is the organisation of *comprehensive* political exposure. In no way except by means of such exposures *can* the masses be trained in political consciousness and revolutionary activity." He added that for working-class consciousness to become genuine political consciousness, the workers must be trained to respond from a socialist standpoint "to *all* cases of tyranny, oppression, violence, and abuse, no matter *what class* is affected."

*The Internationalist* will be a publication of Marxist analysis and commentary, of programmatic intervention and polemic. It will address those who seek a revolutionary perspective, including advanced workers, radical youth and intellectuals, and fighters for liberation of women, and black, Hispanic and Asian minorities. It will be a journal of revolutionary Marxism for the reorganizing of the Fourth International as the world party of socialist revolution. From this standpoint it will direct its fire not only at the bourgeoisie and its reformist lieutenants, but also against centrist currents whose political zigzags only serve to sow confusion where clarity above all is needed.

*The Internationalist* is a publication of the Internationalist Group, formed by cadres expelled last year from the Spartacist League/U.S. and the Grupo Espartaquista de México, sections of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist). The founding statement of the Internationalist Group appears on page 3 of this issue. A more detailed analysis of the ICL's recent course can be found in our bulletin,

*From a Drift Toward Abstentionism to Desertion from the Class Struggle*. One of the documents in that collection, "The Post-Soviet Period: Bourgeois Offensive and Sharp Class Battles," is reprinted here beginning on page 24.

The expulsions from the Spartacist League were directly linked to the decision by the ICL leadership to flee from a key class battle in Brazil, led by the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil, to remove police from a union led by their supporters. The ICL first encouraged this campaign, then precipitously broke with the LQB and abandoned the scene at the height of the struggle. The struggle in the Brazilian steel center of Volta Redonda is described in an article translated from the LQB's newspaper, *Vanguarda Operária*, beginning on page 52. In addition, the joint statement of fraternal relations between the Internationalist Group and the LQB appears on page 23.

In order to cover its flight from and betrayal of the struggle in Brazil, the ICL leadership tried to throw up a smokescreen, claiming externally that they were fighting "trade-union opportunism" while internally saying that the situation posed "unacceptable risks to the vanguard" and that it was necessary to "pull our hands out of the boiling water" of the class struggle there. This was a typically centrist act, doing one thing and saying another, veering politically while covering it up with expulsions and lies. This is something new for the ICL, representing a tendency, which if not reversed, poses grave consequences for the organization which for more than three decades has led the struggle for authentic Trotskyism internationally.

Many readers of the SL's newspaper, *Workers Vanguard*, found it hard to believe the account printed there of the sudden purge of its editor for the last 23 years and other longtime leading cadres. And for good reason: *WV*'s account reads like a smear job, and is in fact a demonstrable lie. Trotsky commented an August 1929 letter to the editorial board of the newly launched weekly of the French Left Oppositionists, *La Vérité* (The Truth):

"The attitude of the revolutionary press toward its readers is the most important test of a political line. The reformists deliberately lie to their readers in order to preserve the bourgeois system. The centrists employ lies to cloak their vacillations, their uncertainty, their capitulation, and their adventures. They do not trust themselves and therefore do not trust their readers....

"The mass of workers does not consist of infants! It consists of people with the harsh experience of life. It does not tolerate nursemaids, whose strictness is as a rule proportional to their stupidity. The worker seeks, not commands, but assistance in political orientation. For this it is first of all necessary to tell him what is. Not to distort, not to tendentiously select, not to embellish, not to sugarcoat, but honestly to say what is. The politics of communism can only gain from a truthful clarification of reality. Untruth is needed for salvaging false reputations, but not for the education of the masses. The workers need the truth as an instrument of revolutionary action."

It is in that spirit, that *truth* is always revolutionary, that we launch the publication of *The Internationalist*. ■

# ***Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!***

## **Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!**

On December 9, some 700 people demonstrated on Wall Street in the fight to save Mumia Abu-Jamal and abolish the death penalty. Demonstrators with banners and signs demanding an end to the frame-up and freedom for Jamal jammed the steps outside old Federal Hall as hundreds more watched from the other side of police barricades during the noontime rally. True to form, the capitalist press totally blacked out this protest in the heart of finance capital.

Around the world, the case of the radical black journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal has come to symbolize the fight against the death penalty in the U.S., whose roots go back to the system of chattel slavery. Jamal has been a lifelong eloquent fighter for black freedom, from his days as Minister of Information of the Philadelphia Black Panther Party in the 1960s and his courageous defense of the Philly MOVE organization beginning in the 1970s. That is why Mumia sits on Pennsylvania's Death Row today, where he has been a beacon for the struggle of the more than 3,000 prisoners



**Mumia Abu-Jamal**

Workers Vanguard



Internationalist Photo

**Wall Street demonstration to save Mumia Abu-Jamal, December 9.**

across the country, mainly black and Hispanic men, caught in the machinery of state murder.

In 1982 Mumia was framed up for the murder of a Philadelphia policeman and sentenced to die in a mockery of a trial presided over by one Judge Albert Sabo, who has ordered the execution of more men than any other sitting judge in the country. Today, Hanging Judge Sabo has come back from retirement to continue his persecution of Jamal.

From cop mayor Frank Rizzo, who launched the brutal repression against the Panthers and a bloody vendetta against MOVE, culminating in the police bombing of their home on Mother's Day 1985 under black Democratic mayor Wilson Goode, to the massive web of police corruption, lying and frame-ups that continues even as it is repeatedly exposed, "Philadelphia justice" is the quintessence of racist cop terror U.S.A. The campaign to free Mumia Abu-Jamal is a crucial rallying point for the fight against the entire system of capitalist injustice.

There are several important new developments on the legal front in Jamal's case. On December 4, a U.S. district judge in Pittsburgh ruled that prison officials who intercepted, opened and read Jamal's correspondence with his attorneys "interfered entirely" with his right to legal defense—at the very moment when the Pennsylvania governor was preparing to sign the death warrant for Jamal in June 1995. The ruling stems from a civil suit brought last year by Jamal against a "gag rule," under which prison authorities blocked his access to media interviews and obstructed his access to legal counsel.

Partisan Defense Committee staff counsel Rachel Wolkenstein, a member of Jamal's legal team, noted that Judge Ambrose's ruling "also gives the lie to Judge's Sabo's repeated claims that Mumia deliberately waited until the warrant was signed in June 1995 before filing his petition for 'post-conviction relief' (PCRA) to overturn his 1982 frame-up conviction and death



sentence" (PDC press release, 16 December 1996). The recent ruling stated that the prison's actions violated Jamal's constitutional rights. Federal judge Donetta Ambrose noted that a prisoner's right to "confidential communications with his attorney" is "founded upon the common law, upon the Sixth Amendment and upon the Fourteenth Amendment." Jamal's attorneys will now submit Judge Ambrose's ruling to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court in their appeal to overturn Sabo's denial of Jamal's PCRA petition.

In addition, on December 9 Mumia's attorneys submitted a motion to overturn Sabo's ruling in October when he dismissed new evidence in Mumia's favor from eyewitness Veronica Jones.

*"There is a quickening on the nation's death rows of late—a picking up of the pace of the march toward death. . . . States that have not slain in a generation now ready their machinery: generators whine, poison liquids are mixed, gases are measured and readied, silent chambers await the order to smother life."*

—Mumia Abu-Jamal, in the *Yale Law Journal*, January 1991

tell how she had been strong-armed by the police into changing her story at Jamal's 1982 trial. Not only did Judge Sabo rule Veronica Jones testimony "irrelevant," he had her arrested in court and hauled off to jail on the absurd pretext of a two-year-old outstanding warrant for an alleged bad check.

According to a legal update by Leonard Weinglass, Jamal's lead attorney, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court is now considering a number of briefs, concerning Veronica Jones' testimony and other issues raised during the hearings in the summer of 1995. If Mumia loses his appeal in the state's highest court, a new death warrant could be signed at any moment.

It is the mobilization of mass support for Jamal internationally that has so far stayed the racist rulers from carrying out their death sentence against him, and Mumia's supporters must remain vigilant as critical legal battles unfold. Yet the entire course of this case underlines once more that fighters against racist oppression can place no confidence in the capitalist courts. We must go forward with and intensify the worldwide struggle that has already enlisted hundreds of thousands to save the life of Mumia Abu-Jamal, seeking in particular to mobilize the power of labor, to free this courageous fighter for the oppressed and abolish the racist death penalty.

*Funds are urgently needed for the legal defense of Mumia Abu-Jamal. We urge our readers to send contributions made payable to the Bill of Rights Foundation, earmarked "Mumia Abu-Jamal Legal Defense" to: Committee to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal, 163 Amsterdam Avenue, No. 115, New York, NY 10023-5001. ■*

Ms. Jones had been coerced by Philly cops into retracting her critical testimony that she saw two men running from the scene of the December 1981 shooting, in which a cop died and Jamal was nearly fatally wounded. After a five-year search, Jamal's lawyers finally located Jones, and she agreed to come forward and

## Drop Charges Against Chicago Anti-Klan Protesters!

All opponents of racist terror must defend three anti-Klan protesters who are the targets of a court and cop vendetta in Chicago because of their participation in a June 29 demonstration against the KKK. Bogus charges of assault and battery against police mean that Partisan Defense Committee labor coordinator Gene Herson and Jeff Lyons, a supporter of Refuse & Resist, face as much as one year in jail, and Dennis Glass, a young black worker, faces up to two years.

We salute the anti-Klan protest, and call on our readers to send statements demanding that the charges be dropped to: Richard Devine, State's Attorney of Cook County, Richard J. Daley Center, 55 W. Randolph Street, Chicago, IL 60602. Send donations, earmarked "Anti-Klan Protesters," and copies of protest statements to the Partisan Defense Committee, P.O. Box 99, Canal Street Station, New York, NY 10013-0099.

We reprint below the protest sent by the Internationalist Group on 30 November 1996:

State's Attorney of Cook County  
Chicago, IL

We vigorously protest the outrageous prosecution of anti-Klan protesters, arrested in the police pepper gas attack and assault on the demonstrators at Daley Plaza on June 29. Three of those demonstrators are now scheduled to go on trial December 2. The protesters came out to stop the fascist terror provocation by the KKK which is a deadly threat to blacks, unionists, immigrants, Jews and gays, while the state repressive apparatus acted to defend the fascists and kept the nightriders' planned action secret. This provocation came in the context of the wave of racist burnings of scores of black churches across the South and elsewhere. As the Democratic convention approached, necessarily recalling the brutal cop attack on anti-Vietnam war protesters in 1968, the city of Chicago escalated its repressive acts against those who would mobilize against the racist terrorists and their masters in the partner parties of racist capitalist rule.

We demand that all charges be dropped against those arrested on June 29! We append copies of statements previously sent by the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil and Geraldo Ribeiro, president of the Volta Redonda Municipal Workers Union (SFPMVR).

Sincerely,

Jan Norden, for the Internationalist Group

**"The whole world knows of the racist terror of the Ku Klux Klan. . . . The whole world of the workers and oppressed and their organizations must mobilize to stop the advance of racist terror. We demand immediate freedom of all the activists arrested at the June 29 Chicago protest against the Ku Klux Klan, and the complete and immediate dropping of all charges against them!!"**

**—from statement by the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil, 5 July 1996**

# Joint Statement of Commitment to Fight to Reforge the Fourth International

*We print below the excerpted statement of fraternal relations between the Internationalist Group (IG) and the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil (LQB).*

We, the undersigned, who have declared our commitment to the struggle to reforge an authentically Trotskyist, democratic-centralist Fourth International as the world party of socialist revolution, have established fraternal relations on the road to an early Leninist fusion. We:

—Denounce the unjustifiable and unprincipled breaking of fraternal relations with the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil/Luta Metalúrgica (LQB/LM) by the leadership of the International Communist League (ICL), which fled from a sharp class battle over the central question of the state (on removal of the police from the unions) and betrayed the ICL's own program and previous calls, claiming that association with the LQB/LM in this work posed "unacceptable risks for the vanguard";

—Condemn the bureaucratic purge of leading comrades of the ICL, who were removed from leadership positions for their political positions in fights over Germany and Mexico and then expelled because of their views on Brazil, in particular for defending the Declaration of Fraternal Relations with LM against its renunciation by the [ICL's] International Secretariat majority and for internally criticizing statements by I.S. leaders that prepared the way for breaking relations; and

—Uphold the continued validity of the fundamental points of agreement outlined in the Declaration of Fraternal Relations between the ICL and LM, in particular for proletarian opposition to the popular front; for a working-class fight against black and women's oppression; for unconditional military defense of the bureaucratically deformed workers states against imperialism and counterrevolution, and proletarian political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracies; to fight to reforge the Fourth International through a programmatic struggle to uphold authentic Trotskyism. These positions were reaffirmed in the 4 July 1996 letter of the LQB to the ICL condemning the latter's break of relations.

We note the important advances by the comrades of the LQB in the direction of transforming themselves into a *fighting propaganda group*, nucleus of a Trotskyist party in Brazil.

These advances were all being discussed with the ICL in letters of 29 January, 23 February and 15 March 1996, corresponding to internationalist Trotskyist norms of frank dis-

cussion. However, rather than seeking to implement these points, the I.S. leadership and its representatives in Brazil increasingly failed to acknowledge real progress and used problems in implementation—at a time when the LQB has been under ferocious attack from the bourgeoisie, its repressive apparatus and agents—as an excuse to distance themselves from and eventually break with the LQB and flee from the struggle the I.S. itself initiated.

In affirming the above and as a result of our experience of principled fraternal collaboration, we declare our aim to work toward an early fusion of our forces in a common Fourth-Internationalist tendency. Reflecting the priority of this effort, the Internationalist Group was formed in the United States with a commitment to launch a journal, *The Internationalist*, at the earliest possible date. The LQB and the IG undertake to see that materials are also brought out in Spanish, with the aim of expanding internationalism and also in order to bring together both organizations linguistically.

We guide ourselves by the rules of the Fourth International, as stated in the Transitional Program:

"To face reality squarely; not to seek the line of least resistance; to call things by their right names; to speak the truth to the masses, no matter how bitter it may be; not to fear obstacles; to be true in little things as in big ones; to base one's program on the logic of the class struggle; to be bold when the hour for action arrives."

—7 November 1996



Vanguarda Operária

**Municipal workers at July 4 rally in Volta Redonda, Brazil. Signs say: "Bourgeois Courts, Military Police and Municipal Guards Out of the Union" and "Bourgeoisie Hands Off Our Union."**

# The Post-Soviet Period Bourgeois Offensive and Sharp Class Battles



Time

Militant French workers struck and demonstrated for weeks during November-December 1995. While sold out by reformist leaders, explosive mobilizations beat back plans by conservative government to gut pensions.

## ICL: Waiting for "Better Times"

By Jan Norden

The following article is reprinted from the July 1996 bulletin, "From a Drift Toward Abstentionism to Desertion from the Class Struggle," consisting of documents by former leading cadres of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) purged from the Spartacist League in June. Written shortly after these events, this article addresses the defeatist conclusions being drawn by the SL leadership in the wake of the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union and in conjunction with the recent fights in which former Workers Vanguard editor Jan Norden was involved.

To cover its increasing tendency to passive propagandism and give a political justification for our expulsion, its break of fraternal relations with the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do

Brasil/Luta Metalúrgica, and its flight from the battle being waged by the LQB/LM to remove cops from the Volta Redonda municipal workers union, the leadership of the International Communist League has gone back and labeled a whole series of interventions proposed by Norden and Salzburg as "get rich quick" schemes. And to justify their abstentionist line, the ICL leadership has a constant refrain about the reactionary nature of the period: "Failure to recognize the period we are in and the necessary relationship of our small revolutionary vanguard to the proletariat has generated disorientation, demoralization and appetites to look elsewhere for the 'answer'," writes *WV* No. 648 (5 July 1996). What is the nature of the present period? The article states:

"In a period conditioned by the colossal defeats for the in-



ternational proletariat signified by capitalist counterrevolution in the former Soviet Union and across East Europe, this puts our small forces in a conjuncturely fragile situation.

"Across West Europe, the working class has fought back in some of the largest and most militant battles in years, yet for the first time since the Paris Commune, the masses of workers in struggle do not identify their immediate felt needs with the ideals of socialism or the program of proletarian revolution."

This not only overstates the historic *reformist* "socialist" consciousness of the West European working masses, but by emphasizing exclusively the overall reactionary character of the period and qualifying the significance of the explosive mass labor struggles in Italy (1992 and 1994) and France (1993 and 1995), it represents a significant shift away from the line adopted by the International Executive Committee in January. The memorandum adopted by the IEC states:

"The ruling classes are on a ruthless offensive with precedent-setting attacks dictated by Maastricht, NAFTA and other rival trade blocs and which are equivalent to Thatcher's war on the British miners or Reagan's busting of the air traffic controllers strike. But this is also a period marked by convulsive battles of the working class in its own self-defense.... "It is a period of high stakes. The breakup of the once-hegemonic Stalinist parties creates an opening in which we could rapidly grow through intervention as fighting propaganda groups with a revolutionary Trotskyist program, and through exemplary actions. But we are not the only ones who seek to exploit the instability of the period. *We will grow at the expense of our opponents, especially the centrists, or vice versa....*

"Across West Europe, the working class has engaged in some of the largest and most militant battles in years, yet for the first time since the Paris Commune, the masses of workers in struggle do not identify their immediate felt needs with the ideals of socialism or program of socialist revolution. The most conscious militants still defiantly march under the red flag of revolution and sing the *Internationale*. But the mass is justifiably skeptical, thanks to the crimes of the Stalinists, Socialists, and their pseudo-Trotskyist tails who sold out the October Revolution and paved the way for the capitalist onslaught today."

Compared with the excerpt from *WV* quoted earlier, the IEC memorandum sees a much more contradictory and unstable situation, with possibilities for intervention and rapid growth by a Trotskyist fighting propaganda group undertaking exemplary actions. But in its polemic justifying our expulsion, the ICL leadership sees a seamlessly reactionary period, with its own forces in a "fragile" state, and the only mention of exemplary actions is to retrospectively denounce the 1993 Berlin hostel defense.

In attempting to explain our expulsions, *WV* states: "The party hadn't changed, nor had Norden particularly. What had changed was the world." The article quotes parts of a letter to me by Joseph Seymour (24 April 1996). I will quote a little more:

"Your political personality has not changed fundamentally over the years though you do seem to have become more

impatient for organizational successes, especially where you are personally involved in the work. What has changed fundamentally is the world in which we live and function. And therein lies the crux of the problem.

"In the mid-1870s, Engels described Auguste Blanqui as 'a man of the pre-1848 era.' By this he meant that it was no longer possible for communists to ride the bourgeois-democratic revolution to power in West Europe. Instead communists were faced with the lengthy and often mundane task of building mass organizations of the working class, then in a largely atomized condition, in continental Europe.

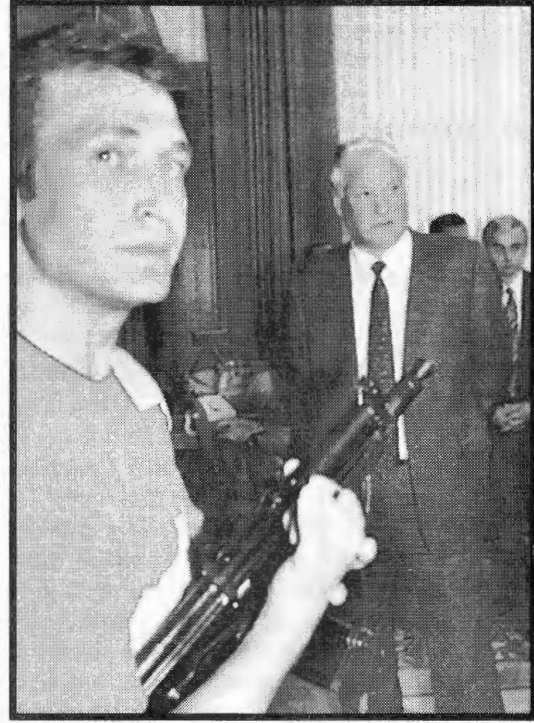
"I would now describe you as a man of the pre-1991 era or, more accurately, as a man of the pre-1976 era. When I was in Germany last fall, I said to Max half jocularly: 'Norden is acting as if reunified Germany is Portugal in 1974-75.' The world of 'Mass Strike' and kindred groups is gone forever. I believe you do not accept that, beginning in the late 1970s, there has occurred a *historic retrogression* in the political consciousness of the working class and left internationally. This development both conditioned the counterrevolution in the Soviet bloc and has been reinforced by it."

Leaving aside the crude psychologizing, I quote Seymour's letter *in extenso* because it is the most coherent expression of the outlook of the present ICL leadership. In a draft reply I was working on before we were deluged by the purge campaign (trial and expulsion of Socorro, escalating fight over Brazil, suspension and expulsion of Norden and Salzburg, "leave" and expulsion of Negrete), I noted that there likely were underlying differences in the ICL leadership on the question: "Thus on several occasions, as in your letter to me, you have tended to overstate the nature of the change in world conditions as concerns the prospects for revolutionary struggle.... Put briefly, I think that some comrades believe that this is a *period of defeat*, whereas in my view we are living in a *period which was the result of a world-historic defeat for the working class*, namely the destruction of the Stalinist-ruled, bureaucratically degenerated and deformed workers states of the Soviet bloc; one which is currently marked by a *bourgeois offensive against the working class*, but is also a *period of turbulent proletarian struggles that can pass from the defensive to the offensive*. The key, as always, is the fight to forge a revolutionary leadership."

And this is the nub of the question, for in his letter Seymour states succinctly the real perspectives of the ICL's International Secretariat (I.S.) today:

"Stop trying to get rich quick. It ain't that kind of period. And when things do change for the better, one thing is certain: it will still be a very different world than the one in which the Soviet Union and Stalinism existed. Meanwhile, our main task is to educate and train—at all levels—the relatively few young comrades we have to take advantage of better times in the future."

Out of the destruction of the Soviet bloc degenerated/deformed workers states, the ICL leadership has drawn the defeatist conclusion that we have entered a bad period in which not much can be achieved. Hence those who perceive opportunities must *ipso facto* be opportunists; seeking



**August 1991 coup marked turning point of counterrevolution that destroyed Soviet bureaucratically degenerated workers state. ICL correctly called then on Soviet workers to smash Yeltsin/Bush counterrevolution. Today, ICL claims the Stalinists "led" the counterrevolution in East Germany. And in the USSR? Left: Russian nationalist in uniform of tsarist army brandishes Soviet flag with hammer and sickle cut out. Right: Boris Yeltsin seized power amid Stalinist collapse.**

openings for intervention is labeled pursuing "get rich quick" schemes, and when sharp class battles are posed (as in Germany at the height of the fascist attacks on immigrant hostels, or today in the fight for cops out of the union in Brazil) the I.S. *denounces or abandons the struggle*. Its analysis of the period is the handmaiden to an *objectivist* perspective and policy of *passive propaganda*. The ICL leadership sees its task as simply holding on to the program and *waiting for "better times."*

There have been shadings of differences in discussions in the ICL on the nature of the period before, but this abstentionist outlook has really taken shape in the course of the recent fights. It is in good part the generalization of the lessons drawn from the Germany discussion, now applied to the entire ICL. Even at the January IEC, this tendency had not been consolidated. In the discussion on the tasks and perspectives memorandum there, I commented:

"The document is very good on the description of the period coming after the tremendous defeats for the working class represented by the counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and East Europe. It says on the one hand it's a reactionary period, and it also is a period marked by convulsive battles by the working class in its own self-defense. I think that the French strike wave very dramatically showed that.

"It's conditioned by the defeat for the working class of historic proportions, but it is not simply defined as a period of defeat. For one thing, the outcome is not foreordained. And

I thought that Jim's analogy with the period from 1929 through the late '30s was very apt, very much what I'd been thinking. The period following Hitler's coming to power in 1933 was also a period of tremendous defeats, as in Spain, in France and elsewhere. It was also one of struggles such as the Spanish Civil War, which ended in disaster with the bloody strangling of the proletarian revolution by the Stalinists in the name of the Popular Front."

Yet when I said virtually the same thing at a recent I.S. meeting, this was denounced as deviant because in the 1930s the Soviet Union still existed. Yes, and so did the Moscow Trials and the strangling of the Spanish Revolution.

In his letter to me, Seymour refers to the "pre-1991 era." But we are still in the imperialist epoch, defined by Lenin as the final stage of capitalist decay, an era of wars and revolutions. Within this epoch, there have been many periods, but none of extended duration. Seymour himself wrote the article demolishing the Mandelstam theory of a long post-war boom supposedly extending from 1945 into the 1970s. More recently, Mandel, in the 1994 debate with Seymour for the Spartacist League/U.S. and the ICL, objected to our characterization of the present period, saying:

"The Spartacists underestimate the gravity of the current long depressive wave of capitalism. They write, 'The present period is marked, above all, by the impact of the counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and the other deformed workers states of Eastern Europe.' This is wrong. The principal fea-

ture of the world situation is the worldwide offensive of capital against labor....

"There is nothing 'reformist' in recognizing that under such conditions the workers' struggles are mainly defensive ones, and revolutionary Marxists have to give priority to this, as Trotsky did in Germany from 1929 on. Like at that moment, what is on the immediate agenda today is not the struggle for revolutionary conquest of power by the workers, but the need to eliminate unemployment in a radical way in the West and the East and in a substantial way in the South."

—*Spartacist* [English edition] No. 52, Autumn 1995

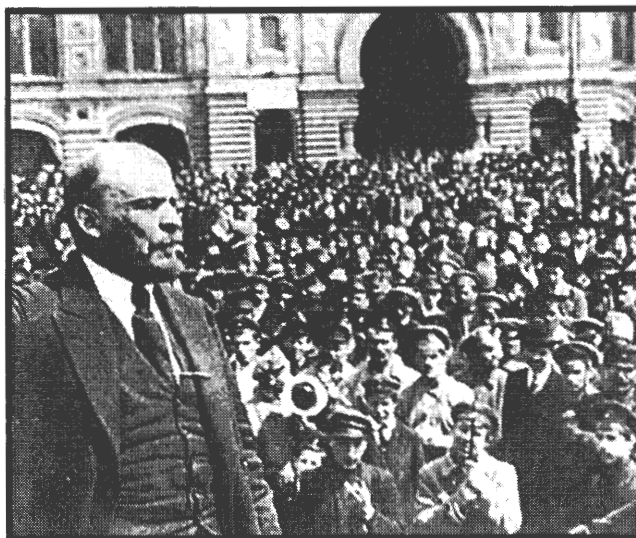
Mandel's perspective of a period of defensive workers struggles and the reformist utopia of "eliminating unemployment in a radical way" without a revolutionary conquest of power summed up his outlook.

In contrast, the article in *Workers Vanguard* (Nos. 591 and 592, 7 and 21 January 1994) that Mandel objected to, titled "Workers Struggle Across Europe," focused on the thesis that in the present bourgeois offensive against the working class, defensive struggles can be transformed into an offensive against capital, through the fight for a *transitional program* for proletarian revolution and to build Trotskyist parties. Responding to an article in *Le Monde* which asked, "What is there in common between May 1968" and "this somnolent France of 1993, where ideologies no longer have a hold, where recession keeps up unemployment and strikes are at a record low?" we wrote:

"The working class is certainly on the defensive, but, hardly asleep; the Air France strike and its reverberations in workers struggles across Europe showed that the fighting mood of the masses can quickly change. Defensive struggles can rapidly go over to a challenge to the capitalists. Today the bourgeoisie proclaims the 'death of communism,' but in the 1950s they also declared the 'end of ideology,' and that didn't stop the outbreak of significant social struggles a few years later. What is key is the question of *leadership*....

"The job of revolutionaries is to pose the *objective tasks and needs of the working class*, not to reflect the limitations of the current or spontaneous consciousness of the working class. Only on this basis will the indispensable instrument of the revolutionary party be forged. This is not to say that small revolutionary groups can jump over their own heads, even in revolutionary situations, or make up through will power and healthy lungs for nonexistent roots in the working class. An insurrection cannot be mounted simply because it is posed. But the *programmatic tasks* facing the working class do not change because the instrumentality is lacking or weak. The recent wave of class struggle in West Europe points to the potential for new situations like Belgium 1961 and France 1968. The key is to prepare for this by intervention in the class struggle to forge the revolutionary party."

This certainly isn't the standpoint of the ICL leadership today, which in "a period conditioned by the colossal defeats for the international proletariat" can only see that this "puts our own small forces in a conjuncturally fragile situation" (*WV* 648); [a leadership] which in the face of a sharp class struggle in Brazil, led by comrades with real roots in the working class, decides that this poses "unacceptable risks" and exits the scene.



UPI

**Despite period of darkest reaction following defeat of 1905 Russian Revolution, Lenin noted that working class returned to the offensive by 1912. Five years later, Russian workers carried out first successful proletarian revolution in history.**

This stands in flagrant contradiction to the above program for "intervention in the class struggle to forge the revolutionary party." Does the ICL still uphold the article on workers struggles in Europe? Certainly not in practice.

### Past Periods of Reaction

In any case, the length of the present reactionary period is not foreordained, and depends above all on the course of the class struggle. What about past periods of reaction? Seymour refers in his letter to the mid-1870s. This is the period after the defeat of the Paris Commune. In a conversation, Foster raised the same comparison. I objected that the situation today is strikingly different—indeed the comparison is instructive for the *contrast* with the present times. A book by Michelle Perrot, *Workers on Strike: France 1871-1890* (1987) looked at statistics on labor struggles in that period. It showed that for the decade after 1871, the number of strikes picked up only gradually. Then, after a strike wave in 1880-82 leading to defeat, there was another sharp fall, followed by a period of recuperation. It was not until May Day 1890 that the first general strike was held. Emile Zola's book *Germinal*, recently made into an excellent film, dramatically portrays the difficulties of organizing workers' struggles in that period—much of his material came from the coal miners strike at Anzin in 1878. Zola showed how a lot of leftists opposed strikes with Proudhonist arguments and a despair born of defeat. It took two decades for the workers to recover from the impact of the defeat of the Commune. This is quite logical given the bloody massacre of upwards of 30,000 Communards which followed the conquering of Paris by Thiers' mercenary troops.

A comparison has also been made to Russia following the defeat of the 1905 Revolution. In the initial years, workers' struggles plummeted. Lenin cites statistics showing the num-



ber of strikers falling from 2.8 million in 1905 to 1.1 million in 1906, 740,000 in 1907 and barely 60,000 in 1909 and 50,000 in 1910, the darkest years of Black Hundreds reaction (V.I. Lenin, "Economic and Political Strikes" [May 1912]). Again, this reflects the fact that the Revolution was decisively militarily defeated. But already by 1911, the proletariat gradually went over to the offensive, and by 1912 the working class was waging sharp battles across Russia, particularly in response to the massacre of strikers in the Lena River gold fields, and Lenin was writing of "The Revolutionary Upswing" (June 1912). So even that period of very sharp reaction was relatively short-lived. By late 1914, antiwar sentiment was rife among the working class, and by 1917 the October Revolution was carried out. The decisive element was not the nature of the period but the course of the class struggle, and the role of the Bolshevik Party under Lenin's leadership.

Europe and particularly Germany after the defeat of the 1848 Revolution went through a lengthy period of reaction, lasting over two decades. Marx and Engels waged a sharp struggle and eventually split the Communist League in opposition to those impressionists led by Willich who sought to produce a revolutionary uprising in Germany through sheer force of will. The founders of scientific socialism warned that the proletariat must go through "fifteen, twenty, perhaps even fifty years of war and civil war" to prepare itself to take power. It is worth asking on what basis they arrived at this prognosis. Marx and Engels spelled this out in their political-economic review which appeared in the final issue of the *Neue Rheinische Revue* (November 1850):

"With this general prosperity, in which the productive forces of bourgeois society develop as luxuriantly as is at all possible within bourgeois relationships, there can be no talk of a real revolution. Such a revolution is only possible in the periods when *both these factors, the modern productive forces and the bourgeois forms of production, come in collision with each other.... A new revolution is possible only in consequence of a new crisis. It is, however, just as certain as this crisis.*" (emphasis in original)

Marx and Engels' prediction of no new revolution for a period of decades was based on the analysis that bourgeois society was undergoing a prolonged period of development of the productive forces. This did, in fact, take place under Louis Napoleon's Second Empire in France, whose fall led to the Paris Commune, and in Germany particularly under the impact of the Bismarckian unification of the country in the Second Reich. But to argue that we are facing such a period today would be a profound revision of the Leninist theory of imperialism.

Mandel, who actually did hold this revisionist view, justifying his policies of calling for "structural reforms" in the Belgian general strike of 1961 and during the French May 1968, tried to disguise this with his various theories about "late capitalism" and the like. In his debate with the ICL, Mandel's device was the fairy tale of a Kondratiev-style "long depressive wave of capitalism," which he used to argue that Marxists would have to "give priority" to the fact that workers struggles would

be "mainly defensive," claiming that this was Trotsky's policy in Germany "from 1929 on."

So what about the period from 1929 on? A major parallel between the present period and the 1930s is the fact that the earlier period was marked by the world-historic defeat for the proletariat of the German Nazis' takeover of power in 1933, of which Trotsky wrote: "History has recorded no parallel catastrophe" (Transitional Program). He denounced the ultra-left adventurism of the so-called "Third Period" proclaimed by the bureaucratic centrists of the Stalinized Comintern in 1928 and coinciding with the onset of a severe capitalist economic crisis (the Great Depression). Trotsky ridiculed the CI's claims of an ever-increasing "radicalization of the masses" as an "empty catechism, not the characterization of a process" (see "The 'Third Period' of the Comintern's Errors" [January 1930]). He subjected these claims to a rigorous analysis of French strike statistics and other indicators of the temper of the masses, criticizing the French CP leadership's fatuous description of the strikes as "offensive" where they were in fact defensive.

But Trotsky did *not* declare that workers' struggles would for a whole period be mainly defensive, as Mandel would have it, and certainly not in Germany. In fighting against the rising Nazi menace, he wrote: "A united-front policy with respect to the Social Democracy must be pursued in the very near future to render possible, on the basis of proletarian democratic representation, the creation of class organs of struggle, i.e., of *workers' soviets*" ("The Only Road," September 1932). Already at the outset of this period, in 1928, Trotsky emphasized "the explosive character of this new epoch, with its abrupt changes of the political flows and ebbs, with its constant spasmodic class struggle between Fascism and communism" (*The Third International After Lenin*). In the same work, he noted how in the early stages of the campaign against the Left Opposition, "Stalin set himself to accuse us of refusing to recognize stabilization. This accusation became particularly insistent in the period when the 'stabilization' already began to crack anew...." Trotsky and Cannon also pointed out how Bukharin and Lovestone, respectively, drew rightist conclusions as they were overawed by the strength of U.S. imperialism as it emerged newly hegemonic from World War I and the ebb of the post-war revolutionary wave.

Trotsky repeatedly emphasized that the so-called "stabilization" of the mid-1920s was not the result of objective economic causes so much as of the weakness of the subjective factor, that is, of revolutionary leadership. Moreover, by July 1931 he was writing: "The revolutionary tide is now indisputable." This was in his article, "Some Ideas on the Period and the Tasks of the Left Opposition." Members of the ICL would do well to reread this little essay. Trotsky emphasizes there that the weak forces of the revolutionary vanguard must focus on *propaganda*, but he does not *counterpose* that to participation in the struggles of the working class, as the I.S. leadership has done in Brazil. Trotsky wrote:

"Our strength at the given stage lies in a correct appreciation, in a Marxian conception, in a correct revolutionary prog-



Reuter

**Four hundred thousand German workers mobilize in Bonn, 14 June 1996, in the largest union-sponsored demonstrations in the post-war period, to protest cuts of health and welfare benefits.**

nosis. These qualities we must present first of all to the proletarian vanguard. We act in the first place as *propagandists*. We are too weak to attempt to give answers to all questions, to intervene in all the specific conflicts, to formulate everywhere and in all places the slogans and the replies of the Left Opposition.... I do not want in any way to say by this that we must stand aside from the real struggle of the working class, nothing of the sort. The advanced workers can test the revolutionary advantages of the Left Opposition only by living experiences, but one must learn to select the most vital, the most burning, and the most principled questions and on these questions engage in combat without dispersing oneself in trifles and details. It is in this, it appears to me, that the fundamental role of the Left Opposition now lies."

And what is more vital, more burning and more principled than the struggle for cops out of the unions, that is, on the fundamental question of the state? This is a battle that was encouraged by the ICL and taken up by the fraternal comrades of the LQB/LM; it was prepared by, and carried out in practice, programmatic points contained in the Declaration of Fraternal Relations with Luta Metalúrgica. Now, in the face of the ICL's ignominious flight from the struggle, it is our duty to see this fight through, for the important lessons it provides to the working class, not only in Brazil and elsewhere in South America but worldwide.

### A U.S.-Centric View of the World

Seymour's conclusion, in his 24 April letter, that "our main task is to educate and train" the "relatively few young comrades" until "better times" come around in the future is not

only objectivist, it is a profoundly U.S.-centered view of the world today. It is certainly true that in the U.S., where the class struggle is at a low ebb, recent experience indicates that the potential for recruitment will be of a "relatively few young comrades." However, the situation is very different in Brazil, for example, where at the same time as Lula's PT has demonstrated its bankruptcy and turned sharply to the right, there is a wave of explosive peasant struggles, discontent is rife within the working class over the government's IMF-dictated austerity policies, and there has been a proliferation of centrist groups in recent years. In South Africa, too, the experience of Mandela's ANC in power will likely produce disillusionment and also opposition in sectors of the working class (e.g., among the truckers of Turning Wheel or the recent wildcat miners' strike against Anglo-American), including in the Communist Party. And in Europe, there have been repeated outbursts of working-class and student-youth struggles against government-ordered cutbacks in recent years.

One need only recall the spectacle of Italian metal workers in the autumn of 1992 heaving bolts at their union leaders following the latter's betrayal in junking the *scala mobile*, a gain won in the "hot autumn" of workers struggles of 1969 which adjusted wages for the ravages of inflation. In 1994, under the pressure of the workers' discontent, and seeking to use this to put wind in the sails of a new popular front, the reformist union and party leaders (both PDS and RC) staged several one-day "general strikes." These huge demonstrations eventually brought down the right-wing Berlusconi coalition with the fascists, and put in the Dini government, headed by

the former governor of the Bank of Italy, which began implementing, with the reformists' cooperation, the assault on pensions and social services that Berlusconi had been unable to ram through. This is now continuing under the "Ulivo" center-left popular front of the former Christian Democrat Prodi. This turbulent process has put tremendous pressure on Rifondazione Comunista, which ran as part of the "progressive" popular front and has voted confidence in Prodi. The result has been a spate of contacts for the Lega Trotskista d'Italia in the last couple of years, and violent attacks by RC goons.

In France barely six months ago, there was the biggest explosion of workers' struggle since 1968, with six national union mobilizations in the space of a month. That came after the militant Air France workers' strike of 1993 and the mobilizations the following spring, including both student youth and tens of thousands of unionists, against attempts by Chirac & Co. to impose a sub-minimum wage for young workers. Of course, the French rail and public workers' strikes were sold out by the reformist union tops—with the fake-Trotskyists, who have now become encrusted in the middle (and even upper) ranks of the labor bureaucracy, running point for them. But the experience of the December 1995 strikes, with the daily assemblies, the workers' delegations to neighboring work sites, the mass marches—and the stunning betrayal by the reformists, who "knew how to end a strike"—will inevitably have an impact on a new generation of working-class militants. *Libération* (9-10 December 1995) commented: "After nine days of voting on the strike every morning in a general assembly, they have the sense of participating in a real 'workers democracy.' They seem more like Communards than strikers."

These workers struggles have, one and all, been defensive struggles against the brutal offensive by capitalist rulers determined to do to West European unions what Reagan and Thatcher did to the U.S. and British labor movement in the 1980s, as the IEC memorandum pointed out. But the balance sheet hasn't simply been one of endless defeats. In some places, such as Russia, the impact of the counterrevolution has been so severe that not only have there been no significant labor struggles, the workers are hardly conscious of their existence as a class. Coal miners, who were the most solid core of the Soviet proletariat, today see themselves in many cases as petty entrepreneurs, demanding a better price for coal. But elsewhere, the impact of the bourgeois offensive has been more mixed.

In Germany, the bourgeoisie sought to buy social peace following capitalist reunification by pumping in *hundreds of billions* of D-marks into the "new federal states" to keep things quiet as they systematically dismantled East German industry, sent women workers back to the home, deported immigrant workers and fostered xenophobic fascist attacks. But even in the Fourth Reich of German imperialism, the working class has been far from quiescent. This spring and early summer they came out in the biggest union mobilizations since World War II—some 400,000 in Bonn on June 15—to protest the government's offensive against the "social state." This follows several years in which there have been repeated metal workers', steel workers' and public workers' strikes, in both West

and East, as well as mass demonstrations of youth against fascist attacks. The imperialist masters of reunified Germany cannot count on *Burgfrieden* (civil peace) at home as they pursue their aims of "uniting" Europe under their hegemony.

Defeats are not identical in their impact. The document of the second international conference of the ICL noted that the Soviet, East German and East European workers were not defeated militarily on the field of battle, but centrally because of the erosion of consciousness as a result of decades of Stalinist rule and perversion of Marxism. In a phone conversation at the end of April, after I noted that this was not a "period of defeat" but one opened by a historic defeat brought about not by destruction of the workers' organizations in battle but as a result of massive false consciousness in the proletariat, comrade Robertson remarked that a good formulation would be that "the destruction of the Soviet Union was seen as a defeat, but not as a working-class defeat." This has consequences today. In 1989-90, East German workers were not smashed—they voted heavily for capitalist reunification, particularly for the Christian Democrats. They then felt *cheated* when Kohl's election promises of "blooming landscapes" didn't come true, and instead the former DDR was turned into a rusting junkyard. This produced an initial wave of anger, and also continuing pervasive ideological and political disorientation. Such a situation presents important openings for Trotskyist intervention on the terrain of class struggle and through propaganda explaining the contradiction between authentic Leninism, i.e., Trotskyism, and Stalinism.

WV 648 accuses me of "taking advantage" of language and my role in the International Secretariat to push the SpAD into "launching a campaign in 1991 to agitate for mass strikes. This posture of imminent 'mass resistance' negated the critical factor of *consciousness* which only a Leninist vanguard could produce." In a fight over this policy at the time, a comparison was made to the Comintern's Sixth Congress (1928) pipedreams of ever-growing "radicalization" of the masses following defeats. I responded in a 25 October 1991 letter to the SpAD central committee:

"I certainly have not argued that there would be a period of 'radicalization' and offensive struggles in this period. On the contrary, I repeated[ly] emphasized the opposite, that the workers' struggles would be *defensive* in character. But that is very different from asserting that there would be no big struggles, at most skirmishes, and that it is an 'error' to think that 'the losers would make the turn to workers resistance.' ...

"Basically, what's being argued here is that in the period following counterrevolution, it is impossible for the working class to struggle successfully, and therefore to call for such struggles is to deceive the proletariat. This overarching conclusion is neither proven by materialist analysis nor borne out by history. Not all defeats are the same. Even after the worst defeats, workers continue to fight rearguard actions. And it is not true that all such actions are doomed to failure."

In fact, in the spring of 1991, there were a number of plant occupations by workers facing mass layoffs or shutdowns, mostly outside the control of the union bureaucrats imported



from the West, and a series of weekly demonstrations of tens of thousands of workers in Leipzig, where we were directly counterposed to the SPD, with our bullhorns and banners calling for mass strikes, plant occupations and a fight for a workers government. The I.S. rejects this perspective, but offers no alternative program: this is no accident, for it considered workers' struggle under those conditions illusory.

Today as in 1991, the struggle against the bourgeois anti-working-class offensive requires a fight against the social democracy. The French December 1995 union mobilizations were led by the social-democratic FO labor federation. The reformists pose the struggle as defense of the welfare state, with heavy overlays of nationalism (summarized as a fight against "globalization," when in fact the capitalist economy has been global from the beginnings of this century, with the dawn of the imperialist epoch). The social-democratic concept of the welfare state in one country, or even all of West Europe, is no more viable than the Stalinist myth of "socialism in one country," or even in the Soviet bloc. If the capitalists back down on health care and pension cuts, they will respond by instituting a general wage cut through devaluation, or some other ploy, in order to become "competitive" in this "pre-war" period of increased interimperialist competition. Thus even defensive struggles against attacks on unions and social programs require a revolutionary leadership putting forward slogans to *turn these battles into an offensive against the capitalist system* and to *build Trotskyist parties* to lead the fight for international socialist revolution.

Although the post-1991 period was opened by the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union, a defeat of historic proportions for the world proletariat, it is not preordained to be simply a period of defeat, as many on the left have concluded—including evidently the leadership of the ICL. The virulently Stalinophobic left, such as the Cliffites in the English-speaking countries and the Morenoites in Latin America, hailed counterrevolution in the USSR and assumed that the demise of Stalinism would lead to their heyday. They shared this belief with the mainstream European social-democratic tops. When the bourgeoisie responded to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the East European deformed workers states by unleashing a broad attack on the welfare state, including going after the sinecures of the social-imperialist bureaucracy whose services were no longer crucial, these various brands of social democracy were thrown into crisis.

The struggles of the working class will initially be overwhelmingly defensive in character. The task of communists is to point the way forward to *transforming* them into a fight against the capitalist system, as outlined in the Transitional Program. This was anticipated in 1917 by Lenin in his article on "The Impending Catastrophe and How to Fight It," which led programmatically straight to the conclusion of the need to fight for proletarian power, in the October Revolution. This was generalized in the theses on tactics of the Third Congress of the Communist International which formulated the concept of transitional demands to transcend the traditional separation of the "minimum" and "maximum" programs of social

democracy, in which the socialist maximum program was reserved for Sunday speechifying. Communist parties "must extend and intensify every defensive struggle, transforming it *into an attack on capitalist society*," the Third Congress theses stated. The central element in achieving that transformation is building authentically communist, Trotskyist parties in the fight to reforge the Fourth International.

The WV 648 article on our expulsion claims: "In place of the Leninist party needed to bring revolutionary consciousness to the proletariat, Norden increasingly came to objectify certain political formations and layers—particularly in the former DDR and Latin America—as somehow inherently susceptible to revolutionary politics." In the first place, there *are* particular layers and groupings that are susceptible to revolutionary politics, and in a reactionary period a communist party would certainly focus attention on them. In his article on "The Russian Revolution and the American Negro Movement," written at a time when the civil rights movement was cracking the reactionary McCarthyite consensus of the 1950s in the U.S., James P. Cannon emphasized:

"The Negroes, more than any others in this country, have reason and right to be revolutionaries. An honest workers party of the new generation will recognize this revolutionary potential of the Negro struggle, and call for a fighting alliance of the Negro people and the labor movement in a common revolutionary struggle against the present social system."

Unlike the laborite (and now scab) "Bolshevik Tendency," which sneered at the Spartacist League's labor/black mobilizations to stop the KKK as "ghetto work," the SL has always correctly seen the black question as key to workers revolution in the U.S. It has written of the need to build a "70 percent black party," which today might be amplified to say a "70 percent black and Hispanic party," although it has had little success in moving toward that goal—something that is worth analyzing.

The real story is not that I have put forward a series of "get rich quick" schemes, but rather that the I.S. has come to the view that in this period of defeat, there are no "layers or formations" that are particularly susceptible to intervention by the Trotskyists. Thus Seymour writes in his 24 April letter to me:

"In the case of PDS Communist Platform, you saw elements of communist consciousness where none such existed. In the case of Brazilian LM, I believe you refuse to recognize the *wideness* of the political gulf separating them from us. How could a group of this nature and history, originating and circumscribed within the Brazilian PT/CUT milieu in the 1980s, not have profound differences with us, including differences of which they and we are as yet unaware?"

In the case of the PDS' Communist Platform, the fact is that at the end of 1994/beginning of 1995, numbers of radical-minded youth were attracted to the KPF precisely because it was the object of a virulent red-baiting assault extending from Kohl to the SPD to the PDS leadership of Gysi/Bisky. The SpAD in fact published effective polemics against the KPF,

and I polemicized against them in my Humboldt University speech, as well as against various of the "critical" SED currents who later gravitated to the KPF. The SpAD had a number of youth contacts in and around the KPF, both in Berlin and Halle. But for Seymour, and others in the I.S. who earlier strongly supported the Communist Platform work, it is now deemed *impossible* that there could be any people in or around the KPF interested in communist politics, some of whom could be won through polemical intervention and the test of class struggle to genuine communism (Trotskyism).

As for Luta Metalúrgica (now the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil), it is precisely in the nature of the period that a grouping of heavily minority workers originating in the tumultuous labor struggles at the end of the military dictatorship (not in the "PT/CUT milieu," which came later) could be pushed to the left by events. The LM comrades first came together during the preparation of the mass, illegal 1984 steel strike, which was opposed by the reformist labor leadership. Nor was the 1988 strike (in which three workers were killed by the Military Police) particularly conducive to social-democratic politics. And the open embrace of sections of the bourgeoisie by PT caudillo Lula in the form of the Frente Brasil Popular posed the question of class collaboration point-blank, exposing the bankruptcy of the PT and also the centrists of the pseudo-Trotskyist Causa Operária group, which the LM comrades had joined thinking it was opposed to the popular front. They have moved steadily to the left, with the 1994 Declaration of Fraternal Relations with the ICL marking a definite leap, but one rooted in their whole previous evolution.

In both Germany and Brazil, the I.S. has demonstrated an incapacity to recognize or deal with contradictions that provide an opening for Trotskyist intervention. What is more, in both cases, the ICL leadership has had to revise parts of its

own history for factional reasons. Not only is it claimed that Luta Metalúrgica is labor-opportunist, the I.S. now renounces the Declaration of Fraternal Relations between the ICL and LM. Not only is the intervention directed at the Communist Platform declared opportunist, in the SpAD's reworked conference document any work directed at the PDS is essentially ruled out. Not only is the 1993 East Berlin immigrant workers hostel defense deemed "entirely tokenistic," the whole perspective of recruiting youth through a labor-centered fight against fascist attacks on immigrants is labeled "yet another 'get rich quick' scheme" of Norden. Yet *WV* doesn't mention that this perspective, of recruiting anti-fascist youth in conjunction with defense of immigrants in Germany, was approved in a motion endorsed by the second international conference of the ICL.

The result of the I.S.' increasingly erratic behavior is a pattern of zigzags pointing toward centrism. Certainly its actions over Brazil, in first calling for a struggle over the cops and then fleeing from it as it got hot, claiming association with the work of the LQB/LM posed "unacceptable risks to the vanguard," were a typical *centrist policy*—proclaiming fine principles and doing something else in practice. This scandalous flight from the class struggle and the ICL leadership's drawing of defeatist lessons from the destruction of the Soviet Union represent a strong and increasing tendency toward passive propagandism. Yet even as it hardens in this policy, as Trotsky wrote of the early stages of the bureaucratization of the Comintern, "Centrism is quite capable, it is true, of making big zigzags to the left but as the 'evolution' of Zinoviev has once again demonstrated, it is utterly incapable of conducting a revolutionary line in the least systematic" (*The Third International After Lenin*). Though in a very different situation, this judgement is applicable to the course embarked on by the ICL leadership today. ■

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## France

From Railroad Workers in 1995 to Immigrants, Truckers in 1996

# Workers Struggles Shake Chirac-Juppé Government

## Not a New Popular Front But a Workers Government

Among the several explosions of social unrest that have punctured the myth of a "New World Order" following the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union and the East European bureaucratically deformed workers states, the most dramatic was the November-December 1995 strike movement by French workers. It was the largest and most sustained outpouring of militant working-class action in France since May 1968. While it was eventually called off by reformist bureaucrats scared to death that the mobilizations would break

out of their control and spark a genuine general strike, going beyond day-long parades to a showdown between labor and capital, the rail workers and allied public sector workers (postal, public transportation) managed to beat back the plans by the conservative Gaullist RPR government of President Jacques Chirac and Prime Minister Alain Juppé, who were seeking to push the retirement age up to 65, after 40 years on the job.

While they breathed easier for a few months, the bourgeoisie and the bureaucrats have been unable to break the combative spirit of November-December 1995 or lock it into tightly controlled, secure channels. Barely a year later, a militant strike by French truck drivers broke out following a national labor demonstration on November 19. Quickly spreading throughout the country, the truckers set up more than 250 blockades, pulling their trailers across the *autoroutes* (superhighways) and parking them at key junctions, blocking off entrances to all 13 oil refineries in France as well as many of the 342 fuel depots, sealing off the borders, shutting down deliveries to wholesale markets. The truckers' action was massively popular: an IFOP (French Institute of Public Opinion) survey reported that 75



Focus

**French truckers shut down road transport with 250 highway blockades at strategic locations around the country.**

percent of the population supported the strike, and 87 percent approved of their demands. And the strike soon began to strangle all sorts of industries, from Christmastime deliveries of chocolates to production of automobiles and trucks.

Although the French truckers strike was a continuation of the labor unrest of 1995 (and the 1993-94 struggles against privatization of Air France and the 1994 mobilization against Juppé's plans to introduce a sub-minimum wage for youth), it also represented an important shift. Where previous actions were overwhelmingly of public sector workers, who have a higher rate of unionization, the road haulage drivers are in the private sector. Moreover, while European workers' struggles in recent years have been overwhelmingly defensive in character—in response to attacks on the *scala mobile* (sliding scale of wages, an inflation adjustor) in Italy, on health insurance in Germany, on pensions just about everywhere—the truckers' action was an offensive strike by a relatively lower-paid sector seeking to win new gains.

After 12 days on strike, the drivers were able to win the right to retirement at age 55, after 25 years of work. In addi-



tion, the government promised to issue a decree to pay truckers for "dead time" (the hours spent waiting to be dispatched, between runs, and for loading and unloading). The settlement was by no means a complete success. Union leaders declared victory and called off the action without winning any wage increase (the trucking companies had offered an insulting 1 percent), although drivers will receive a bonus of 3,000 francs (about \$500). This is not a minor matter in an industry where many drivers make little more than the minimum wage for a workweek averaging up to 60 hours. But in achieving significant gains on the key question of pension rights, the truckers will inspire other workers to fight for the same. After eight days on strike, public transport workers in Toulouse won a 35-hour workweek and retirement at age 55, as public transport workers in Rouen struck for the same demands. If this continues, the Chirac-Juppé "reforms" to social security would end up in the dustbin, and Juppé could be out of a job.

These are important achievements, but they are at best temporary. The attacks on social welfare programs are international in scope. Now that the capitalist rulers feel they no longer have to ward off a "communist threat," and facing intensified competition between competing imperialist trade blocs, the bourgeoisie worldwide is trying to loot pension plans, push costs of medical services onto the workers, and slash wages and job protection in the name of "labor flexibility." Workers in Germany and Italy are facing the same assault on social benefits as French workers, as part of the conditions for the introduction of a common European currency in 1999. As a result of the tight monetary "discipline" imposed by the German Bundesbank, requiring that budget deficits be no more than 3 percent of gross national product, unemployment is kept in double digits, with over 20 percent jobless in Spain and Greece. To fight this concerted bourgeois onslaught will require a united working-class counteroffensive.

The French truckers' strikes showed the workers have a tremendous willingness to fight. The highway blockades were solid: at most, private cars were allowed to snake their way through. Some blockades, as at Caen, had up to 1,000 rigs—it would have taken the army to clear the roads (and defense minister Hernu threatened to bring out tanks to do so). Nothing moved out of the refineries: within days, dozens of service stations were shutting down and local officials were rationing fuel. In a couple of instances where a British and a German driver tried to bust through, they ended up in the hospital. Yet the action was not marked by nationalist chauvinism. On the contrary, the French strikers spent the duration of the strike together with the drivers from various European countries who were caught in the blockades, sharing food, swapping stories. While the media spread sob stories about foreign truckers "held hostage," more far-sighted bourgeois figures are worried that the "hostages" could spread the "bacillus" of militant labor action.

European capitalists collectively shuddered at the dramatic impact of the truckers' action. The London *Financial Times* (4 December) went further:

"It's not just the French truck drivers' strike, though that

was bad enough. The government's craven and incompetent handling of the truckers' disruptive industrial action, and its virtual capitulation before most of their demands, amounts to an alarming failure of nerve on the part of the political authorities and an open invitation to other interest groups to try their luck by similar strong-arm methods."

The German news weekly *Focus* (2 December) denounced the strike as "Extortion on Wheels." Auto manufacturers were particularly hard hit: Volkswagen was waiting for sheet metal parts, Audi for air conditioning and heating units, BMW for gearboxes and windshield wiper assemblies. Having introduced Japanese-style "just in time" production methods, which cut costs by slashing inventories, the bosses are belatedly discovering that the system of rapid deliveries depends on the absence of strikes. With suppliers distributed throughout the continent, a strike at any key plant could bring the entire chain to a grinding halt.

The French truckers' strike also gives the lie to the labor bureaucrats' lament that "globalization" makes strikes obsolete. On the contrary, it makes *international* labor action all the more effective. Yet the reformist union tops, whose "maximum program" is for a nationally limited "welfare state," are incapable of waging such a class war that surges over national boundaries. That "social state" was above all a weapon of the bourgeoisies and their social-democratic labor lieutenants in the anti-Soviet Cold War. Once the spectre of a "red menace" was gone, the capitalist rulers quickly abandoned any pretense of providing a social "safety net." So far, the European bourgeoisies have talked tough and then backed down in the face of resistance. But feeling pressure to jack up their profit rates by increasing the rate of exploitation, and to increase "competitiveness" against lower-cost producers amid the burgeoning of world trade, they are gearing up for a showdown. The working class needs a leadership that can successfully wage the coming battles, and it will not come from the social democrats and ex-Stalinists who are irrevocably wedded to class collaboration with "their" bourgeoisie. What is required above all is the forging of a genuinely communist, working-class vanguard party based on the Bolshevik program of Lenin and Trotsky for world socialist revolution.

### **"We're All In the Galley Together"**

Among the French working people, the truckers' strike inspired an outpouring of solidarity action. Many people showed up at the blockades to donate food. The town of Cahors opened up a swimming pool to let the drivers shower, collected wood to be burned in the oil drums at the blockades to warm the strikers, and offered a giant paella. Near Bordeaux, whose mayor is Prime Minister Juppé, farmers organized a "solidarity barbecue." In the small town of Saint-André-de-Cubzac in the Gironde region, halfway between Nantes and Bayonne, food collected by unions was cooked in municipal kitchens, and a hairdresser spent the week shampooing the drivers' hair for free. "It's not exactly their style, beauty salons," she remarked, but added, "We're all in the galley together, so we should help each other out a bit" (*Liberation*, 28 November 1995).



Jérôme Brezillon/Libération

**On eve of deportation raid last August, demonstrators demanding "Papers for Everyone" protested at Paris offices of the government party, RPR.**

In addition to the spontaneous sympathy, there was a great opportunity for the road haulage strike to spread. On November 27 and 28, the flight personnel of all the French airline companies struck, cutting domestic and inter-European air traffic by one-half to three-quarters. On the 26th, the railroad workers at the Sotteville-lès-Rouen voted to strike and occupied a bridge at the entrance to the city, cutting off rail traffic between Paris, Rouen and the port of Le Havre. However, the obvious possibility of and urgent need for a total transportation strike was sabotaged by the union bureaucrats. Nicole Notat, head of the social-democratic CFDT labor federation whose backstabbing opposition to last year's public workers strike was rewarded by the government with positions in the state social security system, denounced as a "farce" any extension of the strike to other sectors. This, despite the fact that the CFDT transport federation is the strongest of the several unions among the truckers. (It also leads opposition to Notat within the CFDT.)

Louis Viannet, head of the CGT federation historically associated with the Communist Party, took a more militant pose, talking of the "possibility" of "enlarging the action." But the previously scheduled union "day of action" on November 27 went nowhere, because it was given no clear marching orders: the CGT brass only said that their call to action would not *exclude* walkouts! Even the teachers of the FSU federation and the SUD-Rail union, whose leaders include numerous present and former supporters of Alain Krivine's Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR), didn't go beyond vague calls for "concrete" but unspecified solidarity action. For the most part, this amounted to bringing food and showing up at the highway blockades. A nice gesture, but hardly what was

needed to win the stunning victory that could have been achieved.

A crucial opportunity for extending the strike to other sectors was with the Rouen railroad workers, who voted to strike on the 26th. The depot and yards at Sotteville-lès-Rouen were a key bastion of militancy in the 1995 rail strike. Yet the rail union leaders went out of their way to separate the two-day walkout this time from the truckers strike. A CGT delegate pointedly said: "Attention! This is not a struggle to support the truckers, not even some kind of solidarity, merely a convergence of struggles" (*Le Monde*, 27 November). This can be ascribed to the ex-Stalinists, long practiced in keeping struggles separate, the better to sell them out (recall PCF leader Maurice Thorez' famous slogan in 1936, "It's necessary to know how to end a strike"). In this case, at the end of the truckers' strike, the CGT leadership didn't sign the accord (although expressing a "positive appreciation" of it), obviously fearing it would be caught out in case of a rank-and-file revolt against the extremely vague settlement. But the fact that the struggle did not expand beyond narrow trade-union limits

was in good part due to the action and inaction of the "far-leftists" of yesterday, who today are a big chunk of the mid-level and even upper-level union leaderships.

"As during the social movement of November and December 1995, no coordinating body appeared to supplant the union organizations," astutely noted *Le Monde*. What was urgently needed was *elected strike committees*, recallable at any time, to place control of the strike in the hands of the ranks, and to enable strikers to overcome the crippling effects of union divisions and reach out to include the vast mass of non-unionized workers (90 percent among the truck drivers, even more in the rest of private industry) and "immigrant" workers. There are *six* different railway worker union federations, divided by political tendency. Elected strike committees could become the nucleus for *workers councils*, drawing in the unemployed and other oppressed sectors, should the struggle expand to a broader social confrontation. And they could lay the basis for genuine *industrial unions*, by providing a concrete experience of militant, united action. The "coordinating committees" that appeared in the 1986 strike, largely the work of the pseudo-Trotskyist Lutte Ouvrière (LO) and LCR, were a poor excuse for strike committees, but they did briefly go beyond traditional union boundaries. However, now that the LCR and LO supporters have moved up in the union bureaucracies, they see no need to go around them. So today these ex-"far leftists" *oppose* such formations.

### **Build a Trotskyist Party!**

There is a burning need to build an authentically Trotskyist party in France. Such a party would intervene in the potentially explosive workers' struggles which have followed one



Laurent Trude-Libération

**Striking truck drivers at blockade outside Rungis, France, follow news of negotiations, November 1995. Truckers receive little better than minimum wage for average 60-hour workweek.**

upon another over the last several years (Air France, 1993-94; student-youth sub-minimum wage, 1994; railroad and public workers, 1995; truck drivers, 1996), raising demands and calls to action that underline the need to break out of the constraints imposed by the reformist party/union leaderships and to embark on a course toward a struggle for power. The November-December 1995 strike movement showed how quickly events will escalate to a fight over "who shall be master in the house," the working class or the bourgeoisie. And in order to lead the workers to a consciousness of their own class interests and a struggle for power—to transform the proletariat, in Karl Marx's expression, from a class *in* itself into a class *for* itself—a revolutionary party must be forged that puts forward a *transitional program* leading to workers revolution. As Leon Trotsky wrote in the founding program of the Fourth International:

"It is necessary to help the masses in the process of the daily struggle to find the bridge between the present demands and the socialist program of the revolution. This bridge should include a system of *transitional demands*, stemming from today's conditions and from today's consciousness of wide layers of the working class and unalterably leading to one final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat."  
—*The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International* (The Transitional Program)

A central question facing all European workers at present is the phenomenon of mass unemployment. The *official* jobless total in France hit a record 12.6 percent last September. The striking truckers showed an awareness of this in demanding and winning agreement that for every driver who retired, a new full-time job will be created. This awareness must be generalized into an attack on the capitalist system which has produced unemployment for millions of workers. Even some bour-

geois economists are advocating a reduced workweek in order to create more jobs, but the proposals for a 37.5-hour, 35-hour or 32-hour workweek put forward by various centrists and reformists, including the various left-wing union federations, are hopeless schemes to *reform* capitalism. Full employment is impossible short of socialist revolution. Thus the Trotskyist demand for a *sliding scale of wages and hours*, to shorten the workweek with no loss in pay to provide jobs with union-scale wages for all, is a *transitional* demand pointing to the need for a socialist planned economy. It also lays the basis for uniting employed workers with the unemployed.

A revolutionary workers party must drive home the fundamental lesson that the fight for the emancipation of the working class cannot be a narrow union action, but must include and champion the cause of all the oppressed. In particular, any serious struggle against the all-sided offensive of capital and its "executive committee," the bourgeois state, must defend and include in its ranks the several million im-

migrants who are currently under massive attack, along with the many youth of North African and African origin born in France, who are commonly (and wrongly) included under the term "immigrants," both by the bourgeoisie and the reformists. A disproportionate number of "immigrant" youth in the working-class suburbs are unemployed. Furthermore, since most public sector jobs require citizenship papers, immigrant workers are concentrated in the private sector. These divisions played an important role in the November-December 1995 strike actions, as private sector workers stayed on the margins of the struggle which focused on the issue of pensions and health care for government employees.

Beyond demands for jobs, pensions and free, socialized health care for all, class-conscious workers must explicitly take up the fight to defend immigrants against the government's program of mass expulsions. Since January 1994, under the vicious Pasqua Laws, children born in France to non-citizens are not themselves guaranteed the right to citizenship. Seeking to raise its 20-percent ratings in the opinion polls by competing with Le Pen and his fascist National Front in immigrant-bashing, the Chirac-Juppé government has sought to complement its economic program of mass unemployment with mass expulsions of immigrants. And contrary to the orchestrated uproar over "illegal" immigration, many if not most of those who today are in the movement of the *sans-papiers* (those without documents) are former legal residents whose papers were cancelled by government fiat. This fight came to a head last August with the government raid on the St.-Bernard church in Paris to remove the more than 200 predominantly black African undocumented workers who had sought refuge there.

The church occupation had been going on since late June and was a focus of public attention. In the days leading up to



the government's August 23 raid, prominent human rights advocates, political personalities and even film stars flocked to the church as a show of solidarity with the *sans-papiers*, ten of whom had been on hunger strike for seven weeks to publicize their desperate situation. This didn't stop Chirac-Juppé, who sent in the CRS riot police with batons swinging, dispatched the hunger strikers to a military hospital, sent the women to the armory in Vincennes and tried to put many of the single men along with scores of other deportees onto chartered planes for Africa. The brutal police assault stirred up a hornet's nest. More than 10,000 demonstrated that afternoon in protest in the Place de la République, including a sizeable contingent of CGT unionists. Four days later, 15,000 marched, including Communist and Socialist party leaders, to protest the "shame" of the anti-immigrant raid and deportations. But it was a demonstration of impotence.

*The French working class, including its substantial immigrant component, has the power to halt these deportations—what it is urgently needed is a revolutionary leadership to mobilize that power.* Instead of a handful of movie stars like Emmanuelle Béart and Miou-Miou expressing their concern, there should have been sizable worker-immigrant defense guards at the church, with plans to mobilize hundreds of unionists on a moment's notice. If the "forces of order" had been surrounded and unable to move, there could have been a militant mass mobilization in response to the raid. As it was, the government had a hard time finding pilots to fly its deportation charters, and it had to use a military plane because ground crews refused to service them. On September 6, transport workers unions demonstrated against the deportations outside the Air France offices on Champs-Élysée. But instead of leaving the question up to the initiative of individual crews, the unions should have ordered ground crews, pilots and air controllers to refuse to handle them. This would have laid the basis for unity in action with workers in Senegal and Mali, where airport personnel refused to touch the planes as thousands flocked to the airports in solidarity with the deportees.

But to carry out such class-struggle actions, leading to a showdown with the unpopular government, requires a leadership and a party with a program for a fight for power. While the CGT and other unions marched in opposition to the deportations, and the SUD federation influenced by the pseudo-Trotskyist LCR gave the *sans-papiers* lodging in its offices, *there was no mass militant working-class mobilization in defense of the immigrants.* To do so would have meant repudiating the chauvinist policies of the union and party leaderships, both Socialist (PS) and especially Communist (PCF). For years the reformists have shown their loyalty to French capitalism with slogans such as "produce French" and disgusting chauvinist acts such as sending bulldozers to tear down an immigrant hostel in the PCF-governed suburb of Vitry on the eve of the 1981 election that brought into office the popular-front Union of the Left led by social democrat Mitterrand. In justification of their viciously anti-immigrant policies, Chirac and Juppé could point to the fact that Mitterrand and "the left" had also victimized immigrants during their years in office.

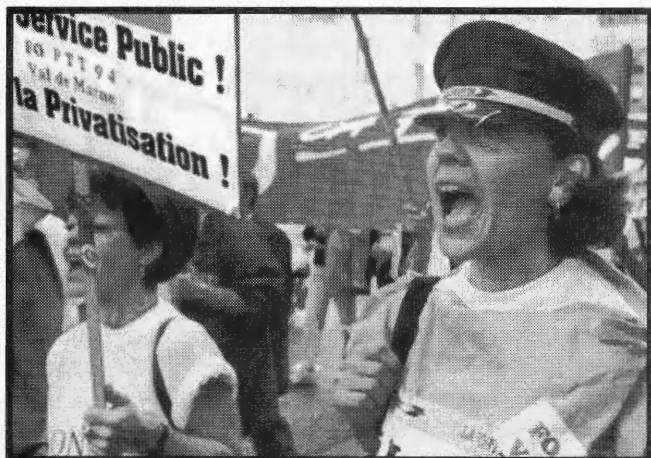
If today, according to a late August poll published by *Le Monde* (27 August), some 50 percent of those who support the Communist Party *approved* of the deportations, *it is due to the PCF's own policies of imperialist national chauvinism.* Their policies laid the basis for Le Pen's increased support in the former "red belt" of working-class suburbs around the capital. (Yet despite their leaders' despicable line towards immigrants in recent years, in the same polls 64 percent of PCF supporters express sympathy for the *sans papiers*.) While the PS, PCF and various "far leftists" of yesteryear call for "Down with the Pasqua Laws," they do not raise any positive demands. And they certainly do not raise the elementary call for *full citizenship rights for all immigrants*, for everyone living in the country.

Social democrats, ex-Stalinists and pseudo-Trotskyists in France all push one or another reform program as a diversion from the struggle for working-class state power. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that in the wake of the destruction of the Soviet Union, removing the last vestige of justification for the separate existence of the long-since reformist PCF, various schemes have been percolating on the French left for a new "project" of "unity." Right-wing Socialists dream of creating a French version of Clinton's Democratic Party, dropping any reference to the workers movement. Communist Party leader Robert Hue wants a new edition of the Union of the Left, this time with formal PCF participation in the government. Alain Krivine's LCR, meanwhile, is placing its bets on "the construction of a new party, whose strategic choices will be unfinished." And while Krivine hails his meeting with Hue at PCF headquarters in Place Colonel-Fabien last year as a great victory, the PCF continues to pursue its policies of "constructive opposition" to Chirac-Juppé (in reality, support with "constructive" criticisms).

What about those who claim to stand to the left of the reformists? Internationally, various centrists limited themselves to praising uncritically the militancy of the truckers. Jorge Altamira's Partido Obrero in Argentina simply proclaimed "Workers Victory in France" (*Prensa Obrera*, 5 December), and the following week quoted *Libération's* editorial comment that "Struggle Pays." The French affiliate of the British-based Workers Power group likewise hailed the "Victory of the Truckers" (*Pouvoir Ouvrier*, December 1996), saying that this showed that strikes work and it was possible to go on the offensive. But how, and for what goals? The maximum program of these pretenders to the mantle of Trotskyism is for "a new 'All Out Together' (*tous ensemble*)."  
A *Pouvoir Ouvrier* leaflet for the 17 October 1996 "day of action" called by the social-democratic FO union federation called for an "unlimited general strike in the public sector." In December 1995, the strike movement in France was rapidly developing toward an all-out general strike, which was certainly on the order of the day. But a general strike only *poses* the fundamental question of a struggle for power. To resolve this, the urgent need is for a Trotskyist party to lead the fight to victory. On *this* question of questions, these centrists are silent.

The weakness of the Chirac-Juppé regime is evident. But this conservative government, which was elected on the prom-

ise of providing jobs, only exists because of the prostration of the reformist social-democratic and ex-Stalinist left, worn out by years in office loyally administering French capitalism for the bosses. Yet the ambition of various pseudo-Trotskyists is to be the left tail of a new popular front, or even brokers for a new "unfinished" French labor party. But *the central lesson of the French workers struggles of 1995 and 1996 is precisely*



Reuters

**French postal workers demonstrate, October 1995 against conservative government's plans to drastically slash pensions, health care.**

*the indispensability of an authentically Leninist party that can intervene in the explosive mass struggles to lead them toward a fight for a workers government.*

The International Communist League and its French section, the Ligue Trotskyiste (LTF) correctly stated, in articles on France in *Workers Vanguard* Nos. 652 and 657 (27 September and 6 December 1996), that "Revolutionary Leadership Is Key." What does that revolutionary leadership consist of? The articles call for worker/immigrant mobilizations to stop racist terror, full citizenship rights for immigrants, a single industrial union of truck drivers and defense of fired truckers. But they stop short of raising a program of transitional demands, making no mention of how to fight mass unemployment, or about how to generalize the struggles leading toward a fight for working-class power. And but for the mention of a motion by a supporter in an assembly of CGT and SUD postal unions in August, calling on the unions to mobilize to stop the deportations, there is no mention of intervention in these struggles by the LTF. In effect, the ICL shares with centrists like Workers Power and Altamira's Partido Obrero the conception that these struggles are necessarily limited to the capitalist framework.

A genuinely Bolshevik party must be built through patient propaganda, systematic education of cadres and also through intervention where the working masses are fighting to defend their interests, in order to lead those struggles toward a revolutionary fight for power. The "Theses on Tactics" of the Third Congress of the Comintern (1921) were emphatic on this score:

"The Communist Parties can only develop through struggle. Even the smallest parties should not limit themselves to propaganda and agitation. The Communists must act as the vanguard in every mass organization...."

"In the place of the minimum programme of the centrists and reformists, the Communist International offers a struggle for the concrete demands of the proletariat which, in their totality, challenge the power of the bourgeoisie, organize the proletariat and mark out the different stages of the struggle for its dictatorship."

Here is the core of the conception of the transitional program later elaborated by Trotsky in the 1930s, another period characterized both by historic defeats for the proletariat (Nazis coming to power in Germany in 1933, Francoist victory in the Spanish Civil War) and by tumultuous workers' struggles, from general strikes in France to the organization of the CIO in the United States.

The French strikes of 1995 and 1996 were fueled by a deep-seated anger and malaise among French working people, who have endured more than a decade and a half of mounting unemployment and deteriorating conditions under governments of both left and right. (In fact, the truckers were striking against regulations decreed in 1983 by PCF transport minister Fiterman which provided only partial pay for loading time.) A unionist in Caen remarked at a solidarity demonstration that "ultimately it is the same anger as in December 1995," calling it a "revolt" against "15 years of *rigueur*" (the French code word for austerity). The awareness of many workers that the popular front in power was no better than the *Chiraquie* presents an important opportunity for revolutionaries. Yet the absence of a revolutionary opposition played a major role in the ability of the bureaucrats to call off the strike. At the same time as he noted that "militancy pays," business consultant and sociologist Henri Vacquin commented: "Because there is no political alternative, with a continuation of the strike one had to fear for social and democratic stability.... Since neither the democratic right nor the left have alternative social projects, a social destabilization would have been very dangerous and can aid the crazies like the National Front" (*Die Tageszeitung*, 7 December).

The fear that only the fascists would profit from "social destabilization" speaks volumes about the evident bankruptcy of the reformist left. What's needed is a struggle pointing to a revolutionary workers government, breaking through the popular-front roadblock of class collaboration to an open fight against the system which means unemployment for millions, racist attacks on immigrants, and a dismantling of even the minimal social "safety net" now considered a drain on profits. It is the task of those who continue on the road of Lenin and Trotsky to build the genuinely communist party which can provide that leadership in struggle, not only in the "hexagon" (France) but also beyond the Rhine, the Alps and the Channel. Against the Europe of the bosses, it is necessary to reforge the Fourth International in the struggle for a Socialist United States of Europe. ■

## Clinton, Dole: Immigrant-Bashing, Welfare-Slashing Racism

# Mobilize the Working Class to Smash Anti-Immigrant Offensive!

**Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants!**

**Defend Blacks, Immigrants, Women, All the Oppressed—**

**Build a Revolutionary Workers Party!**

*The following article was distributed as a leaflet at the immigration rights march held in Washington, D.C. in October 1996.*

On October 12, tens of thousands will march in Washington to protest the anti-immigrant hysteria that has become a central theme in the November elections. Many marchers want a hard fight against the racist offensive which targets Latinos, blacks, Asians and every other oppressed minority. How to do it? It's no secret that the Democrats and Republicans are running the '96 elections as a vicious tournament to see who can be toughest on teenage welfare moms and "illegal aliens." Yet the march organizers want this to be an election vehicle to get out the vote (for the Democrats) and to "send a message" to Clinton that Hispanics have "clout."

The "crackdown" on immigration is not just some electoral ploy but part of an all-sided war on the minority poor that comes straight from the top of the ruling class. The owners of capital want to jack up their profit rates by driving down wages and other costs. They want millions of workers to be forced to slave away at the minimum wage, preferably with no rights at all. The prisons are bursting, and they've brought back that symbol of the Jim Crow South, the chain gang. Meanwhile, the racist involuntary servitude of "workfare" goes together with the axing of welfare, which will mean literal starvation, homelessness and *death* for huge numbers of largely minority poor people. This is "ethnic cleansing" U.S.A.



David Maung/Impact Visuals

**Youth carry banner and signs of United Farm Workers in Oakland protest against California's immigrant-bashing Proposition 187, October 1994.**



There are powerful class forces at work here, yet the demonstration leaders are pitching the event as a way to get Latinos to pull the lever for the Democrats in November. Juan José Gutiérrez, a prime mover of Coordinadora '96 which is sponsoring the march, says that the main objective is "the year 2000 when we really hope all the weight of the Latino community will be felt at the ballot box." Democratic Congresswoman Nydia Velázquez, a scheduled speaker at the Washington march, called on immigrants to "organize politically, naturally, register to vote and vote them out of office" (*El Diario/La Prensa*, 8 October). "Them" is obviously the Republicans. But voting in Democrats will not benefit oppressed immigrants one bit.

This is a replay of the fight over California's anti-immigrant Proposition 187, passed in 1994. Gutiérrez is the director of One Stop Immigration in Los Angeles, which initiated a huge demonstration that brought some 80,000 opponents of this racist measure into the streets in Los Angeles. The numbers were impressive, many Latino unionists marched. But throughout the summer and fall of '94, the organizers focused on getting out the vote for the Democrats. Meanwhile, Democratic Senators Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer and gubernatorial candidate Kathleen Brown were calling for militarizing the border. The liberals' program was ultimately for *kill-ing* Mexican workers coming across the line!

Prop 187 passed...and its liberal opponents sued. A federal judge ruled that many of its provisions, such as barring children of "illegal" immigrants from public school or preventing immigrants from using public hospitals, were illegal because they went against federal laws. But two years later, the Republican Congress has passed and Democrat Clinton signed into law a host of measures that make most of Prop 187's racist provisions legal. And now the same forces who led the fight against Prop 187 into a dead end are doing a repeat at the national level.

Bourgeois pressure politics, lobbying, court challenges and the like are not going to put a stop to the assault on immigrants. There will be a lot of windy electoral rhetoric in Washington October 12 about "sending a message" and making the politicians sit up and listen. Not a chance. They listen to the voice of big business. These budget ax murderers are the hatchet men for the exploiters and oppressors. The racist cops are their enforcers.

*To defeat the immigrant-bashers and welfare slashers, you have to take on both capitalist parties. And to do that you need to mobilize power, real power, the organization and strength of the millions of workers who produce the wealth that the Wall Street bankers, corporate bosses and their politicians live off. The exploited and oppressed need to break with the Democrats and Republicans, the partner parties of American capitalism, and build a fighting workers party!*

Such a party would take the lead in mobilizing the power of labor in defense of immigrant workers and oppressed immigrant communities against *migra* repression. If there were a union-led mobilization, bringing out contingents from the black ghettos and Latino barrios in a solid show of force the next time there are big INS factory raids or immigrant workers are

arrested on the way to a picket line, the shock waves would be felt around the country. Impossible? Look at the mobilizations of tens of thousands of French workers in the streets last August when the government there invaded a church to seize and deport black African immigrants.

It's a question of *leadership*, and the kind of struggle that it will take is not going to come from the flag-waving, job-trusting business unionists who sit on top of the labor movement today. What's needed is an *internationalist* struggle uniting the black, white, Hispanic and Asian working people and youth in the U.S. with their class brothers and sisters abroad who are oppressed by a common enemy: capitalism. Class-conscious workers and defenders of the rights of the oppressed must fight for *full citizenship rights for all immigrants!*

The victimization of immigrant workers is intrinsic to capitalism, which gave rise to the nation-state in which the ruling classes jealously guard and enforce the national boundaries of their sovereignty. In this epoch of decaying capitalism, this has been exacerbated as rival imperialist powers promote chauvinism, race terror and ultimately war in their drive to divide and redivide the world market, neocolonies and sources of raw materials. At the same time, capitalism enormously fosters immigration as the development of the productive forces has long since outstripped national limits. The dominant capitalist countries export capital around the world in a relentless effort to increase the rate of exploitation, at the same time as they import "foreign" workers to make up for labor shortages at home. But when economic downturns come, "guest workers" suddenly become deportees as the "hospitality" of the exploiters who grew rich off their labor expires.

But while the bourgeoisies are inherently *national* classes, the proletariat is an *international* class. Already a century and a half ago in the *Communist Manifesto* (1848), Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels wrote: "The Communists are further reproached with desiring to abolish countries and nationality. The working men have no country. We cannot take from them what they have not got." Today we fight for a revolutionary workers party that stands for the emancipation of all the oppressed.

### Racist War on Minority Poor

Virtually every major piece of domestic legislation in the last year has been directed against immigrants: "antiterrorism" laws, under which refugees from tyranny will face "expedited" hearings without appeal; a welfare "reform" act that prohibits "illegal" (undocumented) and legal immigrants from receiving everything from food stamps to Medicaid; and now the bipartisan immigration act signed into law on September 30. In addition to confirming the other sweeping victimization measures, this reactionary law aims at terrorizing poor immigrant workers with beefed-up INS raids, while *doubling* the size of the Border Patrol for the second time in Clinton's administration. Meanwhile, the police beat and murder blacks, Hispanics and immigrants with impunity in the streets of New York, where killer cop Livoti just got off after chokeholding Anthony Báez to death, or on the highways of California.

The Republican platform calls for eliminating the right to

citizenship for children of undocumented immigrants. To do so they would roll back the 14th Amendment to the Constitution, a product of the Civil War which abolished slavery and guaranteed citizenship to everyone born in the U.S. The Democrats counter this by militarizing the Mexican border with hundreds of troops, cops and high-tech weapons. Around the country there are chauvinist "English only" laws and ballot initiatives aimed at eliminating bilingual education and making it impossible for non-English speakers to get government services or defend their rights.

In California, the racist offensive continues to roll, with a "son of 187" referendum on the ballot this year to outlaw any form of affirmative action on behalf of oppressed groups. "Klansman in a suit" David Duke recently went to Cal State Northgate to whip up support for this, in a state where the KKK mounted anti-immigrant terror "patrols." Now the authors of Prop 187 are preparing a new measure, the California Lawful Employment and Residence (CLEAR) initiative, which would make it a crime to rent or sell property to "illegal" immigrants. One of its sponsors bragged that it "will take care of illegal immigration in California. This initiative will move them back to their own country, into another state or into a box." This McCarthyite legislation instigating racists to turn their neighbors in, also allows companies to sue competitors who hire undocumented workers (*Los Angeles Times*, 10 October).

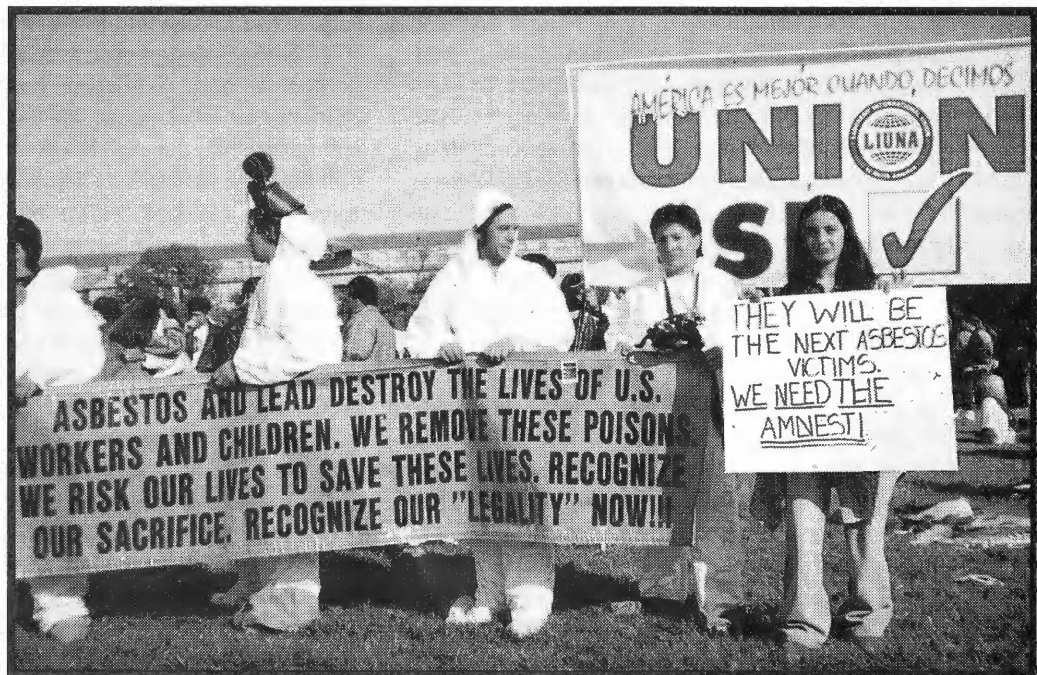
But the anti-immigrant hysteria is not the product of some "fringe" elements—it has been whipped up from the pinnacles of power by the spokesmen of both capitalist parties. In order to know how to fight the onslaught against immigrants it is necessary to understand where it is coming from. The drive to stop immigration and push out many immigrants who are long settled in their "host" countries is an *international* phenomenon. Its origins are to be found in a shift in the needs and policies of imperialist capital in the period following the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Stalinist-ruled, bureaucratically degenerated/deformed workers states of the Soviet Union and East Europe during 1989-92.

Following World War II, as the imperialists launched the Cold War against the "Soviet menace," particularly in West Europe they combined anti-Communist repression with welfare state measures (and building up the anti-Soviet social democrats). The complex of measures of health insurance, public

housing, vacation and pension systems was intended to undercut the "red threat" at home. In addition, after the period of postwar reconstruction was past, by the mid-1950s an acute labor shortage had developed in northern and western Europe. To fill the manpower needs of industry, several million workers were imported first from southern Europe (Italy, Greece, Spain and Portugal), and later, when this source dried up as a result of economic development in their home countries, from the neocolonies of the European powers (Turkey for Germany, North Africa for France, the former Empire for Britain).

In the United States, the pattern was different. Following the anti-"foreigner" and red scare hysteria of the 1920s, which slashed immigration by more than 80 percent in the space of a few years, there was a steady ebb and flow of seasonal migrant labor from Mexico. But the big increase in legal immigration during the 1960s, '70s and '80s was largely a by-product of Washington's foreign policy, fueled by refugees from the various wars and other military/economic aggressions of U.S. imperialism, from Southeast Asia to Latin America. There was a backlash against immigrants following the 1974-76 post-Vietnam War economic crisis, and during the 1980s Ronald Reagan waved the spectre of a "red tide" of "feet people" from Central America spilling over the Mexican border. Yet the Reaganites came out of California agribusiness circles, which had grown rich off of exploiting Mexican workers performing low-wage, backbreaking stoop labor. The 1986 immigration "reform" act provided a limited amnesty while making it illegal for undocumented immigrants to work and instituting employer sanctions. Nevertheless, the number of "illegals" kept growing.

Since World War II, common hostility toward the Soviet bloc kept the imperialists more or less united under American



Internationalist Photo

Immigrant asbestos removal workers, who recently won union recognition in New York, at 12 October 1996 immigration demonstration.



Michelle Gienow/Impact Visuals

**Immigration cop in San Diego chaining undocumented workers, October 1993. Every year, 1.5 million Mexican immigrants are seized and deported by *la migra*.**

leadership. With the collapse of Stalinist rule in Moscow and East Europe, U.S. president Bush proclaimed a "New World Order," modeled on the coalition Washington put together to wage the 1990-91 Persian Gulf slaughter against Saddam Hussein's Iraq. It was supposed to be a "one-superpower world" in which the UN acts as a fig leaf for untrammelled U.S. imperialist hegemony. But the imagined Pax Americana quickly turned out to be a new world *disorder*, as nationalist wars and social explosions broke out from fratricidal bloodletting in the Balkans and outbursts of labor unrest in West Europe to guerrillas in Mexico and ghetto upheavals in Los Angeles. And meanwhile the imperialists began falling out, as competing trade blocs were formed around a German-dominated Fortress Europe, the U.S. and its Latin American "back yard" and Japan's attempt to build a new "East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere." The current international furor over "uncontrolled immigration" is a direct result of the imperialists' attempts to firm up control of their respective areas of influence.

In Europe, reunited German imperialism has turned its sights eastward, modernizing the infrastructure in newly annexed East Germany to turn it into a platform for expansion into what German rulers have always seen as their natural "hinterland." What Hitler's Third Reich failed to do through military conquest, the Fourth Reich's chancellor Kohl is seeking to accomplish with billions of D-marks. Poland and Czechoslovakia are rapidly becoming "extended work benches" for German industry. And with the millions of unemployed skilled workers in East Europe willing to work for one-tenth the wage of a German worker, German bosses no longer need the infusion of immigrant labor from the former Yugoslavia and Turkey.

Meanwhile, Bonn and Berlin are reordering West Europe

according to the dictates of the Bundesbank: the Maastricht accords on economic unification have slashed welfare state services in the name of reducing budget deficits, and the Schengen accords on immigration have led to a crackdown on North African and black African immigrants in France and Italy. This shift in imperialist priorities at the top has been accompanied by the growth of racist terror and fascist groups such as Le Pen's National Front in France and Fini's National Alliance in Italy. In Germany, Nazi firebombings against immigrants have been directly tied to the anti-immigrant policies of the parliamentary parties.

The 1992 Rostock pogrom

took place the day after the Social Democrats agreed to gut the constitutional right to asylum.

In the U.S., despite the 1986 immigration control act, the number of legal immigrants has increased from a little over 600,000 a year during the 1980s to over a million a year in the 1990s. The largest numbers by far are from Mexico. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), designed by the Republican Bush administration and implemented by Democrat Clinton, was supposed to open markets to capital and close borders to labor. While this has led to a rape of Mexico's economy by Wall Street, the flow of unemployed Mexican immigrants into the U.S. has continued unabated. Well over a million Mexican workers lost their jobs as Harvard-educated economist President Zedillo imposed a Washington-ordered NAFTA austerity plan to pay off the imperialist debt, now secured by Mexican oil revenues which are directly deposited in the New York Federal Reserve Bank. And the elimination of corn and other farm subsidies along with an agricultural counter-reform has thrown millions of peasants off their land, producing guerrilla insurgencies in Chiapas and now Guerrero while fueling immigration to *El Norte*.

The U.S., like Germany, wants to exploit the hell out of its hinterland (its Latin American "back yard") while controlling access by its neocolonial wage slaves to the heartland of the Reich/empire. "Backlash Over Immigration Has Entered Mainstream This Year," headlined the *Wall Street Journal* (27 September). The racist "populist" Buchanan crows: "Bill Clinton and Dianne Feinstein now are echoing Pat Buchanan." In the past couple of years, U.S. authorities have carried out massive blockades, building miles-long steel fences, pouring in hundreds of immigration agents in Operation Hold the Line



(El Paso), Operation Gatekeeper (San Diego) and Operation Safeguard (Arizona). Deputy Attorney General Jamie Gorelick says that the Border Patrol will "secure the entire Southwest border. We do have a plan for the activities in El Paso and San Diego to meet up. We intend to close the entire border."

Various defenders of immigrant rights have argued that it is impossible for the U.S. to close the 2,000-mile border with Mexico. Wrong. They can do it, but it will take much more "muscular" methods than used until now. And Washington is gearing up to do that. The Pentagon has set up a military unit supposedly dedicated to the "war on drugs," Joint Task Force 6 (JTF-6), operating out of El Paso. Mexico has been added to the target list of Operation Distant Shores, under which Haitians and Cubans were housed in Guantánamo and other U.S. military bases (*Crossroads*, December 1995/January 1996). Already the brig at the Naval Air Station in San Diego is being used to hold hundreds of immigrants caught by the Border Patrol. The Federal Emergency Management Agency has been put in charge of coordinating activities for an immigration "emergency." And while fascistic groups mobilized in San Diego to "Light Up the Border" by shining their headlights into Zapata Canyon, a favorite entry point from Tijuana, U.S. authorities have now obtained klieg lights to light up key areas like a football stadium.

Meanwhile, leaked Pentagon documents reveal plans to send U.S. troops to Mexico to help put down guerrilla insurgencies. Already, scores of helicopters and armored helicopter gunships have been sent to Mexico, whose "predominant" purpose is supposedly the "war on drugs," which is really a war on Mexican peasants and American ghettos and barrios.

Ultimately, to "close the entire border," as the Clinton administration vows, the government will have to make its threat of military force real, by killing undocumented Mexican workers. This has already begun. The rash of deaths of immigrants as a result of Border Patrol and local cop highway chases in Southern California last year was a result of tightening police measures. This is not exclusively directed at the Latino population but part of a broader increase in brutal cop repression against minorities. The videotaped beating of undocumented Mexican farm workers by sheriff's deputies in Riverside, California graphically recalled images of the brutal cop beating of Rodney King in Los Angeles four years earlier. The bourgeoisie collectively shuddered as it recalled the 1992 L.A. "riots," in fact a multiracial upheaval, that followed the acquittal of the racist cops in the King beating case, and the Riverside deputies were reprimanded. Yet the police state atmosphere along the border continues to mount.

### **Mobilize the Power of Labor in Action to Defend Immigrants!**

The "immigration backlash" is coming not just from the right-wing fringe but from the central organs of the U.S. state power, which is concerned to control its borders as it gears up for coming trade wars with its imperialist rivals (which ultimately lead to shooting wars, as the experience of the 1930s shows). These powerful forces will not be stopped at the bal-

lot box, by lobbying, appealing to the courts or staging a march, even a very big march. To defeat such powerful forces we need to mobilize real social power, and that is the power of millions of workers and minorities whose labor makes the wheels of capitalist society turn.

The unions have been gravely weakened over the last two decades as their leaders caved in before every take-back demand from the bosses. The destruction of PATCO at the onset of the Reagan years—as the striking air controllers were left in the lurch by the AFL-CIO tops, notably of the Machinists, Teamsters and Pilots unions which together had the power to *shut down the airports*—led to the unbroken string of defeats that followed. This debacle was the product of a labor leadership, installed in power by purging "reds" from the unions at the onset of the Cold War, who consciously saw themselves as the "labor lieutenants" of U.S. capitalism. They did their anti-Communist duty abroad, helping the CIA to oust leftist unionists and engineer coups from Europe to Latin America. Their high point of success was in building up Polish Solidarność, the "union" patronized by the anti-Soviet pope and arch-reactionary Ronald Reagan, while opportunist leftists hopped on the bandwagon, proclaiming their "Solidarity with Solidarity." At home, this same union leadership saluted when its bourgeois masters demanded wage cuts, two-tier salaries, mass layoffs and wholesale plant shutdowns, devastating entire industries.

After a decade and a half of the union tops playing dead, the labor movement seemed to many (including in its own ranks) to be pretty much moribund. The Sweeny "team" elected to head the AFL-CIO in 1994 claims to be a "new voice for American labor." But these are some of the same people, like Richard Trumka of the Mine Workers, who crushed plant occupations by their membership, rammed through "two-tier" contracts and presided over the decimation of union jobs. Today, various unions and labor groups are supporting the October 12 march, including the International Union of Electrical Workers, the Randolph Institute and the Texas AFL-CIO. But to defend immigrant rights requires using the *power* that organized labor has. This means a class-struggle fight to oust the misleaders, whose loyalty to the capitalist system means they refuse to mobilize that power.

What would a real, labor-led mobilization of workers and minorities be? To answer this, look at what has happened, and not happened, in the past. As the 1994 vote on Prop 187 in California approached, Latino truckers staged work stoppages and drove in caravans from the L.A./Long Beach port to ring Los Angeles City Hall with their rigs. This significant action should have been a signal to bring out other key sectors of L.A. labor, including longshore, aerospace, transportation and government workers. When the same Latino truckers tried to organize a union last year and refused to haul to and from the port, the ILWU dock workers union should have stopped work in solidarity; they did not, even though freight on the docks was barely moving for several days.

Repeatedly, immigrant workers seeking to organize in the L.A. area have faced heavy police repression. When the SEIU Local 399 janitors struck Century City in 1990, they were met



Internationalist Photo

### Internationalist Group at October 1996 immigration march in Washington, D.C.

by a wall of cops. At the time of the 1992 upheaval against the acquittal of the racist cops who beat Rodney King, Local 399 staged a march under conditions of martial law protesting the arrest of many Latinos (including some of their members) by the *migra*. Key unions such as the ILWU dock workers should have called a political protest strike against the army/police occupation of L.A. Latino drywallers and framers in the L.A. and Orange County construction industry were surrounded and detained by INS cops during their 1993 and 1995 organizing strikes. There should have been an immediate mobilization by all of labor to come to the aid of the arrested strikers before they were deported. Although the state AFL-CIO has set up a California Immigrant Workers Association, this is simply a bureaucratic operation. In *all* of these key cases, L.A. and California labor did *not* mobilize to back up the immigrant workers under attack.

The question of the *state* is key to any serious fight in defense of the oppressed. The pro-capitalist leadership of the unions today supports the bosses' Democratic Party, look to the state to aid them, and bow before the bosses' laws. Take the question of organizing sweatshops. For many years, the social-democratic-led ILGWU garment workers union's "answer" to runaway shops was to sing "Buy American" jingles, making foreign workers instead of the American bosses the enemy. But when the domestic garment sweatshops began reviving with low-wage immigrant workers in the 1980s, the ILGWU finally decided to try and organize some of them. In the minority of shops that were organized, many contracts required the company to notify the union if it learned of an impending INS raid on the shop. But what would the union do when notified? They would send down some lawyers to see if the warrant was in order, protesting the violation of contract rights, while doing nothing to mobilize labor action. Like the crucial battle to organize the "open shop" South, a serious ef-

fort for labor organizing in the sweatshops requires a leadership and program which can defeat the institutions of racist capitalism, mobilizing the workers and oppressed in class struggle that does not bow to the bosses' dictates.

The new Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE) has recently undertaken a campaign against sweatshops. How are they waging it? They are touting a bill by Democratic Senator Ted Kennedy making apparel manufacturers and retailers responsible for labor conditions in their contractors' shops. This will have about as much success as the AFL-CIO's attempt to get the Democrats to get Congress to pass a bill outlawing (permanent) "replacement workers" (scabs)—namely none.

"You can't fight the state," say the pro-capitalist union tops. Wrong. To unionize the sweatshops will require seriously mobilizing union power, for undocumented workers toiling for slave wages will necessarily fear to act alone. However, the goods they produce are moved by truck and railroad. The Teamster and rail unions should "hot cargo" struck goods; a blockade would make sure that no one else moves them either. But that would mean going up against the provisions of the Taft-Hartley and Landrum-Griffin anti-labor laws which outlaw "secondary boycotts." It would mean going up against the National Labor Relations Board, to which the union leaders look to organize elections. It would mean facing the repressive machinery of the courts and cops. But such a struggle is how the Teamsters organized over-the-road drivers and built a powerful union, using the "hot cargoing" tactics they learned from the Minneapolis Trotskyist Teamsters who led the 1934 general strike there.

The need for genuine *internationalism* is central to a program to defend immigrants' rights. Going back to the 19th century, the pro-capitalist union tops have pushed for protectionist measures that target workers in other countries, while agitating for the exclusion of "foreign" workers from the U.S. From the Chinese Exclusion Act of the 1880s to the racist internment of Japanese Americans during World War II to the 1986 Immigration "Reform" and Control Act, which the AFL-CIO tops vociferously demanded, the bosses' pet labor officials have been in the front ranks of racist campaigns against immigrants. Seeking to curry favor with the Democratic Party, the organizers of the October 12 march call only for extending "amnesty" to immigrants who arrived here before 1992! This is an open stab in the back against hundreds of thousands of immigrant workers.

In contrast, Marxist revolutionaries defend the *international* working class. The demand raised by Trotskyists for *full citizenship rights for all immigrants* is a democratic demand that goes back to the days of the bourgeois-democratic revolutions of the 18th century. But today, in the imperialist epoch of decaying capitalism, it can only be won through a socialist revolution that abolishes the exploitative rule of the bourgeoisie.

At the time of the French Revolution, the constitution of 1793 approved by the Jacobin revolutionaries granted French citizenship to any foreigner who joined the fight for liberty in

France. Thus the American radical democrat Thomas Paine was made a citizen of the French Republic in August 1792. Jacobin leader Robespierre declared, "The men of all countries are brothers, and the different peoples should assist one another as much as possible like citizens of the same state." After the Russian Revolution led by V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky, the 1918 founding constitution of the Soviet workers republic declared: "Acting on the principle of the solidarity of the toilers of all nations, the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic shall grant all political rights enjoyed by Russian citizens to foreigners resident within the territory of the Russian Republic for purposes of employment and belonging to the working class or to the peasantry not employing hired labor. Local Soviets shall be authorized to confer upon such foreigners, without any troubles and formalities, the rights of Russian citizenship."

To wage the fight needed today to defend immigrants as part of a broader struggle for the emancipation of all the exploited and oppressed requires the leadership of a Bolshevik workers party. As Lenin stressed, the model for revolutionaries:

"...should not be the trade union secretary, but *the tribune of the people*, who is able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, no matter where it appears, no matter what stratum or class of the people it affects; who is able to generalise all these manifestations and produce a single picture of police violence and capitalist exploitation; who is able to take advantage of every event, however small, in order to set forth *before all* his socialist convictions and his democratic demands, in order to clarify for *all* and everyone the world historic significance of the struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat."

—*What Is To Be Done?* (1902)

Key to the struggle for workers revolution is a proletarian fight against the oppression of women. Women workers are frequently the most exploited, from the *maquiladoras* of Mexico and Central America to the sweatshops of New York City.

A revolutionary workers party would fight to win Latino and Asian immigrants as well as U.S.-born workers to *internationalist* consciousness. By playing to ethnic/nationalist symbolism the petty-bourgeois and bourgeois Latino leaders divide the mass of the Latino poor from their black and white class brothers and sisters. They want to get some "clout" as another ethnic pressure group. It is no accident that they modeled this march on last year's Million Man March led by the anti-woman, anti-Semitic and anti-immigrant black nationalist demagogue Louis Farrakhan. Farrakhan's reactionary message was "atonement," for which he earned the praise of quite a few white racist leaders, including Republican vice presidential candidate Kemp, who saw how this theme of "personal responsibility" could fit into their own agenda of blaming black people for their own oppression. In contrast, a revolutionary integrationist leadership would direct the struggle against the racist ruling class, fighting to break the oppressed minorities from the capitalist Democratic and Republican parties who trample on minority and immigrant rights.

An internationalist leadership would fight to win Latinos to the crucial understanding that the black question is central

to the American socialist revolution. While today in many areas, undocumented Latin American and in some cases Asian workers are among the lowest paid and most brutally exploited, historically the black question is key to all political and social questions in racist America. The capitalists, in their perennial effort to set one sector of the oppressed against another, will always try to pit blacks versus whites versus Hispanics in a struggle for crumbs from a shrinking pie. A communist vanguard would win Latino workers to the understanding that their own liberation must be inseparably linked to the fight for black liberation through socialist revolution. Likewise, such a vanguard must politically defeat black misleaders, from Democrat Jesse Jackson to nationalist Farrakhan, who seek to act as brokers in subjugating the mass of the black population to one or another sector of the racist capitalist class.

We in the Internationalist Group fight to advance the struggle for a Bolshevik party forged on the program of revolutionary internationalism under whose banner Lenin and Trotsky built the first workers state in history. It was this program that Stalinism sought to extirpate as it betrayed the October Revolution, preparing the way for the ultimate destruction of the Soviet Union and East European workers states by suppressing revolutionary workers democracy and suicidally seeking "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism. The bourgeoisie's battle cry of the supposed "death of communism" is a lie. Communism lives in the struggles of the international working class and the program for building its Leninist vanguard party. It is more urgent than ever to seek to win to this program the most advanced workers, radicalized youth and fighters against racist oppression. The struggle to mobilize the multiracial working class to smash the anti-immigrant offensive is a key part of this effort. ■

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An Internationalist Group Pamphlet



# The ICL Leaders' Cover Story: Smokescreen for a Betrayal

*The following statement by the Internationalist Group was issued as a leaflet on 13 September 1996.*

It's hard to miss that something is seriously wrong with the official story the International Communist League's leadership has put out to justify its purge of long-time cadres this past June, followed almost immediately by its break of fraternal relations with the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil/Luta Metalúrgica (LQB/LM). First came a publicly distributed, 149-page bulletin of internal ICL materials, which was filled with documents against the expelled comrades, and complained that Norden and Stenberg alone had produced "at least 392 pages" of documents in a year-long internal struggle, but reproduced only one of those documents, their "Response to a Frame-Up 'Trial'." Any serious reader trying to figure out what the fight was about was left wondering what we had to say.

Then *Workers Vanguard* (No. 648, 5 July 1996) published a "polemic" which even sympathetically inclined readers found remarkably short on concretes, specifics or serious political argumentation. The expelled comrades, who have now formed the Internationalist Group, published an extensive bulletin (*After Spartacist League Purges Leading Cadres, ICL Flees from Class Battle in Brazil: From a Drift Toward Abstentionism to Desertion from the Class Struggle*, July 1996) that provides point-by-point answers to the ICL leadership's distortions and outright falsifications, carefully documents what really happened in Brazil and explains the political meaning of these events.

After a month and a half of silence, the ICL has now published a cursory "answer" to us (*WV* No. 651, 13 September 1996). But, as will be immediately clear to anyone who has read our bulletin, *WV*'s "polemic" answers *none* of the documented facts and political arguments we put forward. This exercise in blatant *political evasion* accompanies an edited version of the August 1 New York Spartacist forum where ICL speaker Jon Brule rehashed, often word for word, the *WV* 648 articles on our expulsion and the break with the Brazilian LQB/LM.

## From "Little" Distortions...

Our bulletin pointed out:

"A notable aspect of the recent fights and sharp turn to the right by the ICL has been its systematic use of distortion and outright lies, in flagrant contradiction to the proud tradition of the Spartacist tendency."

In little things as in big, the ICL's "answer" piles on more evidence that it has adopted wholesale dishonesty as a method of political combat.

Take the statement in the article's very first sentence that our bulletin was "published without a union 'bug' (label)." The implication is that our bulletin was printed in a scab shop.

But the fact is that we did every bit of work on the bulletin ourselves. This was stated clearly on the front cover of the bulletin, which says "Labor donated"—a fact *WV* neglects to mention. Numerous Spartacist League leaflets and documents have stated that they were produced with "labor donated." Volunteer labor was how the Spartacist League originally printed and reproduced its *Marxist Bulletin* series for years (up to and including *MB* No. 9, Basic Documents of the SL).

*WV*'s baiting is a clumsy attempt at a smear job aimed at obscuring real political debate. Like the repeated claims in Brule's speech that we "split" and "left" the party—when in fact we were bureaucratically *expelled*—this gives a measure of the dishonesty of *WV*'s account.

## ...To a Full-Scale Cover-Up on Brazil

A significant part of our bulletin was devoted to documenting how, after the ICL correctly encouraged the Brazilian LQB's struggle to remove police from the Volta Redonda municipal workers union (SEPMVR), the "new I.S." (International Secretariat) fled from this crucial class battle.

We quoted the June 5 I.S. motion saying that "given the sinister provocations and threats of state repression," association of the ICL with the LQB's union work "presents unacceptable risks to the vanguard." We reprinted the LQB's powerful response to the ICL's disloyal break of fraternal relations, in which the Brazilian militants stress that "as the ICL representatives were fully aware, the day you cut off relations was *one day before the union assembly called to separate the municipal guardas [police] from the municipal union!*" We cited one leaflet and newspaper article after another from Volta Redonda on the record of the Brazilian comrades' fight to remove the cops from the union and the repression they have faced in carrying out this struggle.

Yet with supreme arrogance, the *WV* No. 651 "polemic" pretends this doesn't exist, saying:

"The Nordenites' cover story for our supposed 'centrist turn' is that we 'deserted the class struggle' by breaking fraternal relations with the Brazilian Luta Metalúrgica (LM) group, allegedly as their MEL [Municipal Workers in Struggle] supporters in the municipal workers union in Volta Redonda were about to raise a motion to kick the cops out of the union at a June 19 union meeting."

"*Allegedly*"?! What nauseating cynicism! Every Volta Redonda union activist knows this is what happened and would dismiss *WV*'s sneer with disgust. As the MEL paper (July 28) reported, the police intervened to shut down the June 19 union meeting where union president Geraldo Ribeiro "read the resolutions of the 1st Seminar [of the union], among the main points of which is: To disaffiliate the municipal *guardas* from

the SFPMVR, because they are not part of the working class." In fact it was just at this point that the police dissolved the meeting.

Eight days after the June 19 meeting, Ribeiro was suspended by the courts, at the "request" of pro-cop provocateur Artur Fernandes, who was appointed by the bosses' courts to be their puppet union "president." The bourgeois press reported the pro-police faction's motives: "they state they are against the proposal to disaffiliate the municipal *guardas* from the union," whereas "disaffiliation is called for by suspended union president Geraldo Ribeiro" (*Diário do Vale* [Volta Redonda], 20-21 July 1996).

Since Ribeiro refused to abandon this struggle, the popular front city government escalated its vendetta, charging him with "slandering" the city because of the campaign he has led against the racist firing of a black woman, Regina Célia. This charge, based on a draconian law inherited from the military dictatorship, can bring up to four years in jail.

But as far as *WV* is concerned, it is just "allegedly" and according to us that all this has to do with the fight waged for cops out of the union before and during the June 19 union meeting. Yet the ICL leadership knows full well that this is the case. Contempt for the truth is the mark of cynics, not revolutionists. Not only is the I.S. in possession of the leaflets and multiple articles from the bourgeois press (many of which it hid from the ICL membership), but at a June 16 meeting with the Brazilian comrades, the I.S. representatives *argued against* the LQB's plans to vote the removal of the cops at the June 19 meeting. We quoted a few of these ICL reps' repeated demands that the Brazilian comrades abandon this fight because it was too dangerous. This was summed up in the egregious call to "pull our hands out of the boiling water." One day after the LQB refused to commit such a flagrant betrayal, the I.S. wrote its letter breaking relations with them. This entire course of events is laid out in detail in a series of written statements sent to the ICL by the LQB mili-

tants directly involved in these struggles.

Next item: The *WV* article says the ICL broke with the Brazilian group "on the fundamental premise that the main task in Brazil was to construct a revolutionary party based on the program of Trotskyism, and to put out a party press reflecting that program." From reading *WV*, nobody would have a clue that less than a month after the ICL broke with them, the LQB comrades *published that party press!* Its name is *Vanguarda Operária*. Pretty strange for a group that supposedly didn't want to publish a party newspaper. Moreover, the article is silent about the fact that at the time of the ICL's break, over half the paper was laid out, despite the weeks-long delay because the ICL rep had the computer codes ("attributes") without which the LQB comrades couldn't open the files.

In addition to selling hundreds of copies of its paper to steel workers, municipal workers, university students in São Paulo and Rio, protesters against repression of landless peasants and many others, the LQB has published its own pamphlet of Trotsky's crucial work "Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay," which explains that a successful struggle to free the workers movement from bourgeois state intervention can be waged only by building the revolutionary, Fourth Internationalist party of the proletarian vanguard. But the line of the ICL leadership is: if we pretend not to notice, then it doesn't exist. Not for nothing did the LQB characterize this method as "illusionism."

## Falsification to Hide Flight from Class Struggle

The *WV* 651 deepens the falsifications and slanders raised to justify the bureaucratic purge of leading members and the ICL leadership's flight from class struggle in Brazil. After dishonestly claiming that the LQB "refused" to "construct a revolutionary party" and "put out a party press," the article claims that "LM refused to break with a course of trade-union oppor-

# VANGUARDA OPERÁRIA

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**Polícia: tire as mãos do sindicato dos municipais de Volta Redonda!**

No artigo "Os sindicatos na época da ditadura imperialista" (1940) Leon Trotsky sublinhou que "a primeira palavra da ordem" dos quatro continentes constituiu-se na luta dentro dos sindicatos de "industrialização total e internacionalização da luta" em direção ao socialismo. Isso significa lutar para transformar os sindicatos em organizações das grandes massas exploradas e não da burocracia operária. A segunda é de "autonomia sindical". Essa palavra de ordem defende a autonomia da primeira e pressupõe para sua realização a independência total dos sindicatos em relação ao estado burguês.

No Brasil o movimento operário padecia de uma profunda crise política e sindical. O "desvio" dos policiais, guardas, camponeses e outros setores da repressão burguesa, junto com social-democratas, nazifascistas e outros, movia a classe trabalhadora ao descontentamento, isolando os sindicatos no "desarmamento especial de luta armada" que, nas palavras de Lenin, é o método do estado burguês. Esta é uma das formas mais abertas em que a burocracia sindical e os reformistas subvertem os sindicatos ao estado burguês. Os países e "homens pátrios" são entregues à burocracia de classe dos trabalhadores. Temos as consequências nas mãos: cada vez mais a classe trabalhadora se desorganiza, a burocracia de classe se fortalece, a classe trabalhadora se desorganiza, a burocracia de classe se fortalece, a classe trabalhadora se desorganiza, a burocracia de classe se fortalece.

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tunism and rotten-bloc maneuvers." What is the proof offered to back up this sweeping statement? *None whatsoever*. Just for example, whom are they supposedly engaged in "rotten-bloc maneuvers" with? *WV* is silent. Brule's August 1 forum presentation claims the Brazilian comrades believe "any unprincipled shortcut or deal is possible. And that's what LM did—and kept on doing—at the top of this municipal workers union, until the police themselves broke the deal...." What "deal" with the cops? This is a filthy smear!

What has occurred is the "bloc" of the bourgeois police and courts, pro-cop provocateurs in the SFPMPVR, the popular-front mayor and most of the Brazilian fake left in a relentless attempt to smash the LQB militants. And as this truly rotten bloc, an unholy anti-communist alliance of the class enemy and the opportunists, spewed out one slander after another, the ICL leadership grotesquely took up some of those lies and repeated them, first internally and now in its public press! That the LQB comrades have pursued the struggle for class independence in the face of these odds, and despite the ICL leadership's abandonment and backstabbing defamation of them, speaks highly of their determination to fight for the cause of the workers and oppressed.

The *WV* 651 articles claim it was "only when compelled by a police provocation" that the LQB/LM took up the question of cops in the labor movement! Once again, this is false. The Municipal Workers in Struggle program, while failing to call explicitly for removal of the cops from the SFPMPVR (an error the LQB has explicitly recognized), included a section on "The Military Question" stating: "The official armed forces are institutions which serve the ruling class.... In Brazil there are various levels: federal (army, navy, air force and federal police); state (military police); municipal (municipal *guarda*)—all are the armed fist of the bourgeoisie." The MEL program adds that any "alliance" with the police is incompatible with class independence, "since they bring men armed and trained by the bourgeois state into the unions."

SFPMPVR president Ribeiro sent the ICL a statement noting that shortly after taking office he carried out negotiations "for the disaffiliation of the *guarda* from the union" even before the discussion of this question that occurred when an LQB representative attended the ICL's International Executive Committee meeting in January. And it wasn't as if this position went unnoticed. The pro-police faction in the SFPMPVR, led by Artur Fernandes, issued a leaflet reproducing the MEL program's denunciation of the municipal cops and calling the March 13 union assembly to "defend the *guardas*." The Artur faction's leaflet began:

"Geraldo clearly wants to exclude the Municipal *Guardas* and watchmen from the union movement, stigmatizing them as **ARMED FISTS OF THE BOSSES**, claiming that an alliance with the Municipal *Guardas* and Watchmen is incompatible with **MUNICIPÁRIOS EM LUTA**, making clear the intention to disaffiliate all the Municipal *Guardas* and Watchmen from the Union."

The facts are clear: the pro-police provocateur—echoed by the bourgeois press and the municipal *guardas*' commander

(as detailed in our bulletin)—went after Ribeiro and the LQB for seeking the disaffiliation of the cops from the union.

When workers turned out to support Geraldo against the pro-cop provocation, the Artur faction called the Military Police against the March 13 union meeting—this is what led the ICL to launch the international campaign for police hands off the SFPMPVR. The fact that the union printed 10,000 copies of the April 11 SFPMPVR paper with Mumia Abu-Jamal's article "Police: Part of, or Enemies of, Labor?" was the pretext used by the bourgeois court to suspend Ribeiro from his elected post as union president.

Then we come to *WV*'s statement that "the June 19 union meeting was *not* advertised as the showdown with the cops the Nordenites would have us believe" and Brule's August 1 statement that "Not only do you make up a bogus issue here, but then you lie about that too." Let's be clear: those the ICL leadership claims are lying about this are not just the so-called "Norden group" but the Volta Redonda militants the *WV* article grudgingly admits carried out a "difficult and principled struggle against the police presence in the union." But let us see who is telling the truth.

The article's talk of "advertising" a "showdown" is revoltingly cynical given that the ICL correctly recommended that LQB supporters make it clear they did not seek a confrontation with the cops. A February 26 letter by comrade Robertson to LQB leader Cerezo noted that "while recognizing with increasing clarity that police within the workers' unions is a fundamentally unprincipled practice, the timing and means of their removal and exclusion needs to be applied thoughtfully, with an eye to the other elements in the immediate situation."

The fact remains that the June 19 union meeting was to be the culmination of a campaign to separate the cops from the union. The ICL's International Secretariat translated, but *did not circulate*, the May 6 MEL bulletin (see graphic, page 54) that began "The Ranks Are Deciding: Police Out of the Union" and reported on the garage workers' assembly that voted that "The police must not be part of the SFPMPVR and the labor movement in general, since they are the instrument and armed fist of the bourgeoisie." On the inside of this bulletin is a headline calling to intensify the campaign internationally and among the ranks and "do as the garage brothers did" and elect representatives against the "police slate of the Artur faction" in delegate elections by work group (the schedule for which is printed in the same bulletin) to a union conference scheduled for June 13. The bulletin ends with the slogans: "Forward with Our Campaign! Police Out of the Union! Workers of the World, Unite!"

The *WV* article cynically claims that the June 7 MEL paper referring to the June 19 meeting said the meeting was about a wage campaign. That was only *one* of the points on the agenda. Point 7 of the agenda for the June 13 delegated union conference (*seminário*) held to prepare for the June 19 assembly was on the Municipal *Guarda*. The June 17 MEL paper reproduces this on its front page, while the back begins in huge letters: "The Campaign for 'Cops Hands Off the SFPMPVR' Is Growing."

The June 18 MEL paper reproduces the main conference



resolution, which states that “the affiliation of *guardas* and police to workers’ unions is incompatible with a class program.”

The June 19 meeting was indeed intended to be the culmination of the campaign for police out of the union. As the June 28 MEL paper reported, the cops and courts shut down the June 19 union meeting where “Geraldo read the resolutions from the First *Seminário*, among the main points of which is: To disaffiliate the municipal *guardas* from the SFPMPVR, because they are not part of the working class.” Showing the arrest of LQB supporter Marcello Carega for leading 150 workers blocking a gate as part of the June 21 nation-wide general strike, it notes “for the ‘blind people’ who do not want to see, this is one more lesson: police (any kind of police) are not part of the workers movement” and thus the June 13 conference called for “excluding the Municipal *Guardas* from the SFPMPVR.”

As the LQB noted in its July 4 response to the ICL, thousands of these bulletins were distributed, not only within the SFPMPVR but elsewhere, including university campuses in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and the V.R. region. Subsequent leaflets (as well as the bourgeois press) reported support to the campaign by the mother of Ernane da Silva Lúcio, a black child murdered in October 1995 by a municipal cop, and the issue continued to polarize the city. While pro-cop provocateur Artur Fernandes drew less than a dozen workers to the “assembly” he held after the courts appointed him puppet union “president,” on July 25 an assembly of 150 SFPMPVR members voted, after a minute of silence in memory of Ernane, to reaffirm Ribeiro as president and to expel the police from the union (see display, top of page 54).

Yet *WV* pretends none of this exists. And what of the demands by ICL representatives at their June 16 meeting with the LQB? Our bulletin cited their calls on the Brazilian comrades to “pull our hands out of the boiling water”; to “formally leave the most prominent issue” the bourgeoisie sought to use against them, their “leadership of the union”; and their denunciation of the LQB’s “intransigent defense of work in a union which at this time poses fundamental risks” to the LQB and the ICL, etc. Yet this is just a small sample of their panicked warnings that “the power of the bourgeois state” was about to lead to a bloody clash in the union and their calls to pull out because the LQB “cannot stand up to this whole offensive of bourgeois reaction, which is trying to destroy the union and which is trying to wait for the best moment to destroy our organization in Brazil.” These quotations can be multiplied at will. Does the ICL leadership dare to claim they are false? Try it—we have the tape of the meeting, and so do they!

*WV*’s evasions, omissions and flat-out lies give the measure of a whole series of associated fabrications—among them the truly repugnant allegation that Norden and Negrete sought to “blunt” political discussions, “excusing weaknesses on the part of LM by claiming they were only ‘cultural differences’” in line with a position that “comrades from the semi-colonial countries would be second-class members”! We challenge the ICL leadership to substantiate this disgusting smear. In fact,

the headlong flight from the class struggle in Brazil carries more than a whiff of Second International-style “socialism” on the colonial question, not unrelated to the new I.S.’ U.S.-centric view of the world. As we noted in our bulletin, the I.S.’ actions in Brazil are a typically centrist clash between words and deeds.

Finally there is the claim that despite breaking fraternal relations, the ICL continues to defend the Brazilian militants against repression. We ask: other than a small, pro-forma box in *WV* No. 650, has the ICL done anything whatsoever since the break to obtain solidarity statements or mobilize international defense for these comrades? To our knowledge, the answer is no. We would be happy to learn otherwise. While *WV* boasts “we are proud of this split” with the LQB, the flight from Brazil was a shameful act which the ICL leadership seeks—in vain—to cover up with lies.

### Digging a Deeper Revisionist Hole on Germany

Seeking to provide a “sophisticated” veneer for a vulgar smear job, the *WV* article is titled “Pabloites of the Second Mobilization.” So how does the *WV* polemic seek to show that we are “Pabloites”? First it quotes Michel Pablo, whose liquidationism destroyed Trotsky’s Fourth International in 1951-53, saying that the Stalinists could “roughly outline” a “revolutionary orientation.” Then it says the “Nordenites” noted that in East Europe and the USSR the Stalinists played “a counterrevolutionary role” and “prepared the way for counterrevolution”! Pablo claimed that non-Trotskyist forces could substitute for a conscious Leninist vanguard party of the proletariat. The *WV* article denounces Norden for saying that in Germany in 1989-90 the key element that was lacking was the necessary revolutionary leadership of the working class. This is the exact *opposite* of Pabloism. Stalin is famous for the cynical statement that “paper will take anything written on it.” Actually, Stalin borrowed this from Kautsky, who was quoting the German saying “paper is patient.” The “new I.S.” must figure that the newsprint *WV* is printed on is patient indeed.

At the same time, the latest article digs in deeper with regard to the statement that the East German Stalinists of the SED led the counterrevolution in the DDR. Our bulletin pointed out that this claim, raised by Al Nelson at the end of the “fight” over Norden’s role in Germany, not only contradicted the facts but is an openly revisionist negation of Trotsky’s understanding of the *contradictory* character of the Stalinist bureaucracy. It is akin to the line that “Stalinism is counterrevolutionary through and through.” In response, the *WV* article insists that “what the SED did” was “lead counterrevolution.”

This statement revises Leon Trotsky’s insistence that the Stalinist bureaucracy was not a class but an unstable caste which survived by parasitically balancing atop proletarian property forms. Because we defend this ABC of Trotskyism, *WV* falsely attributes to us a Pabloite confidence in a so-called “progressive side” of the bureaucracy. Trotsky stressed that in the absence of a proletarian political revolution, the bureaucracy’s betrayals and sabotage would lead to its ouster by capitalist

counterrevolution. Thus, in "The Class Nature of the Soviet State" (1933) he wrote:

"The further unhindered development of bureaucratism must lead inevitably to the cessation of economic and cultural growth, to a terrible social crisis and to the downward plunge of the entire society. But this would imply not only the collapse of the proletarian dictatorship but also the end of bureaucratic domination. In place of the workers' state would come not 'social bureaucratic' but capitalist relations."

Six years later, in his struggle against Shachtman's renunciation of Soviet defensism at the beginning of World War II, Trotsky noted: "Stalin testifies to nothing else but the incapacity of the bureaucracy to transform itself into a stable ruling class" (*In Defense of Marxism*).

Far from the bureaucracy triumphantly transforming itself into a capitalist ruling class, what we have seen is precisely the "inglorious downfall" of Stalinism and the fragmentation of the former ruling bureaucracy, accompanying the counterrevolutionary destruction of the degenerated/deformed workers states of East Europe and the USSR.

The *WV* article notes that in 1990 "Norden edited an article" on the Yeltsin/Gorbachev "500-Day Plan" which referred to this scheme as a "plan for restoration of capitalism." None of the Stalinist leaders opposed capitalist restoration, and Gorbachev came out in favor of it. This is consistent with the statement of our bulletin that the Stalinists "prepared the way for counterrevolution" and that they "play a counterrevolutionary role"—but this is a very far cry indeed from the Stalinist bureaucracy *leading* the counterrevolution.

In order to spearhead the restoration of capitalism, Boris Yeltsin ceased to be a representative of the Stalinist bureaucracy and became the direct instrument of George Bush. Those who denied this sided with Yeltsin against the Stalinist has-beens of the "Gang of Eight" in the August 1991 Moscow coup and counter-coup. As for the former DDR, most of its top bureaucrats were rewarded for their betrayals not by heading capitalist enterprises but occupying the dock in show trials staged by the victorious Fourth Reich.

Let's consider the practical implications of the ICL leaders' new-found position. *WV* 651 prints a photo of the Spartakist speaker on the platform next to SED leaders at the 250,000-strong united-front Treptow demonstration initiated by the ICL in January 1990. If the SED *led* the counterrevolution, what was the ICL doing up on the platform with them? In fact this was the line of the groups who boycotted or denounced Treptow.



Spartakist

**Spartakist speaker at 3 January 1990 mobilization against fascist desecration of Red Army memorial, Treptow Park, East Berlin. Stalinists paved the way for counterrevolution in the deformed workers states. But if they "led" the counterrevolution, what was ICL doing on the platform with them at Treptow?**

The Bolshevik Tendency raised the slogan "No to the Modrow Regime—Main Danger to the DDR!" The Workers League of David North ranted that Stalinism, not the imperialist bourgeoisie and its Social Democratic Trojan horse, was spearheading counterrevolution in the Soviet Union. In Latin America, Jorge Altamira and his Brazilian followers in Causa Operária raised a similar argument to alibi Yeltsin and claim capitalist reunification in Germany would have "revolutionary" consequences. A whole range of anti-Soviet revisionists argued that the Stalinist bureaucracy was the direct leader of counterrevolution in order to justify their call for dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and withdrawal of Soviet troops.

Against such arguments by Workers Power, the British section of the ICL wrote: "The fundamental point of departure between us and Workers Power over the events in East Germany is our understanding of the nature of the Stalinist bureaucracy as a contradictory caste." Quoting Trotsky's 1933 work "The Class Nature of the Soviet State" on how "there cannot even be talk of the bureaucracy playing an independent role," the Spartakist article stressed that the Stalinist bureaucracy "simply capitulated before an imperialist onslaught," saying: "In the face of mass protest against its rule, and increasingly under the pressure of West German imperialist revanchism, the bureaucracy completely disintegrated" (*Workers Hammer*, March-April 1990). Now the ICL adopts the WP-type position that rather than miserably capitulating to the onslaught, the Stalinists led it.

As with the new-found insistence that in no circumstances anywhere can any section of the Stalinist bureaucracy side with the workers under the impact of a proletarian political revolution, the stubborn defense of Nelson's statement that the Stalinists led the counterrevolution points to an abandonment of the Trotskyist analysis on Stalinism defended tooth and nail by

the ICL until now. Denouncing that analysis as "Stalinophilia," the "new I.S." is taking a page out of the book of all the anti-Spartacist revisionists the ICL fought for decades, and taking a big step in the direction of anti-Trotskyist "Third Campism." In fact, the accusations *WV* now hurls at us are identical to Workers Power's charge against the international Spartacist tendency that "for the iSt, Stalinism has a 'dual character' it has a 'bad' counterrevolutionary side, and a 'good' progressive one" (see the *Hate Trotskyism, Hate the Spartacists* bulletin of the Spartacist League/Britain, "Workers Power and the Irish Workers Group," November 1990, page 19).

### Smokescreen on "Factions"

When all else fails, the ICL leadership puts forward what is supposed to be the trump card of its argument: that we didn't form a faction inside the organization. This is accompanied by the now-familiar method of "proving" things by asserting them over and over. Thus, the "polemic" quotes SL speaker Brule at the August 1 forum denouncing us because "by their own admission, they were pursuing underground undeclared factional activity inside the ICL." We "admitted" nothing of the sort, because it isn't true.

To hold that our "crime" was not to form a faction is truly bizarre. It is the kind of argument put forward by people who either are grasping at straws or think their readers are a bunch of suckers. It is a smokescreen to hide the fact that the ICL leadership violated the party's Leninist norms, traditions and statutes to carry out a bureaucratic purge that paved the way for an outright betrayal over Brazil. We explained clearly and repeatedly that under the pressure of the rapidly escalating witchhunt, culminating in our purge, there was no time to pursue the sort of wide-ranging discussions and analysis that, if a faction had indeed been called for, would have been required in order to form one. In refusing to be stampeded into forming a factional grouping, we acted in a principled manner despite the relentless barrage of maneuvers, organizational reprisals, character assassination and slanders against us.

The political logic of the expulsions was drawn out *after* the purge, when the ICL broke relations with the Brazilian LQB and fled from the class battle in Brazil. This was a real *betrayal*, and a faction fight would certainly have been called for to replace the leadership and policy that produced it. After substantial discussions and study (notably on the "Germany fight" in the ICL, the nature of the period and perspectives), the expelled comrades have formed the Internationalist Group to defend the Trotskyist program upheld for over three decades by the Spartacist tendency. Those who are serious about the fight to reforge the Fourth International should study the documents to see who is turning away from that program and who is fighting to push it forward.

### Against the Turn to Centrism—Fight for Trotskyism!

Perhaps the most pathetic aspect of recent polemics is the recurrent claim by the ICL leadership that they were duped and deceived by the devious Nordenites—which in *WV* 651 takes the form of stating that "when the party took

control of [Brazil] work away from Norden and Negrete, we discovered that LM *and* the ICL had been toys in Norden's game of smoke and mirrors." So now the ICL leadership says "Toys Я Us"?

What would it mean if the picture the I.S. presents of itself were really true? It claims that for months it was *suckered* by Norden over what was going on in Germany. As for Mexico, the ICL's fastest growing section, while it had just been officially reported that the Grupo Espartaquista de México functioned like "a good old-fashioned Spartacist League local," it suddenly "came out" (to justify the purge of Socorro and Negrete from the GEM leadership) that the I.S. had supposedly been *deceived* there as well. And then there is the claim that the ICL leadership was *duped* for two years by the Declaration of Fraternal Relations with Luta Metalúrgica, as they wail: We were only a toy in their game.

If this were true, the ICL leadership would have condemned itself as so irresponsible, ill-informed and willfully blind that no serious revolutionist would follow it for a minute. "Dupes" don't lead revolutions. But of course this claim to have been triply duped and deceived is laughable nonsense. The "new I.S." is simply rewriting the party's history in the service of a turn to the right.

The harm to the ICL is being done by the current leadership. If it wished to reverse some of that damage it would rescind the bureaucratic expulsions and the disloyal split with the LQB, retract its unprincipled slanders and open up a wide-ranging party discussion on the source of the recent disastrous course. Instead it digs in deeper. This is not just an episodic "blip." The process is far from over, and many zigzags may lie ahead, but powerful political motivations and pressures are at work here, cutting against the fight for the Trotskyist program.

The ICL leadership screams that it was defrauded over Brazil because, it claims, a group of proletarian militants like the LQB couldn't really agree with the Trotskyist program. This speaks to a real loss of confidence by the ICL leaders in the power and relevance of that program today. More broadly, Pabloite revisionism was motivated in large part by a despairing loss of confidence in the capacity of the proletariat, led by its independent revolutionary vanguard, to carry out revolutionary struggle. It is striking that the repeated theme of ICL polemics against us is that we supposedly *underestimate* just how bad the current period is and *overestimate* the potential for revolutionary struggles—in other words, that we are cock-eyed optimists out of tune with the times.

While the counterrevolutionary destruction of the USSR was a major defeat for the world proletariat, revolutionists must reject the *defeatist* conclusions pushed by the ICL leadership, an echo of the bourgeois "death of communism" campaign. The "post-Soviet period" demands more than ever that we carry the Trotskyist program into the class struggle and reforge the world party of socialist revolution: the Fourth International.

Internationalist Group  
13 September 1996



## Brazil

# Class Struggle in Volta Redonda “Cops, Courts Out of the Unions!”

The following article is translated from issue No. 1 (July-September 1996) of *Vanguarda Operária*, newspaper of our fraternal comrades of the *Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil* (Fourth Internationalist League of Brazil).

In the article “Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay” (1940), Leon Trotsky stresses that “the primary slogan” of Fourth Internationalists in the struggle within the unions is: “complete and unconditional independence of the trade unions in relation to the capitalist state. This means a struggle to turn the trade unions into the organs of the broad exploited masses and not the organs of a labor aristocracy. The second slogan is: *trade union democracy*. This second slogan flows directly from the first and presupposes for its realization the complete freedom of the trade unions from the imperialist or colonial state.”

In Brazil and many other countries, the union bureaucracy carries out the “unionization” of police, guards, jailers and other direct agents of bourgeois repression. Together with the social democrats, Stalinists and others, it thereby shows the consequences of its reformism, bringing into the unions the “special bodies of armed men” who, in Lenin’s words, are the core of the bourgeois state. This is one of the most open ways in which the union bureaucracy and the reformists subordinate the unions to the bourgeois state. The *pelegos* [old-line corporatist union bureaucrats] and “new *pelegos*” are enemies of the class independence of the workers. We see the consequences in the increasingly open betrayals by Articulação [“Link-Up,” the leading tendency in both the CUT labor federation and the Workers Party (PT) led by Luis Inácio Lula da Silva], the CUT bureaucracy, etc., which have paved the way for the strengthening of openly pro-company labor federations like Força Sindical.

But the open reformists are not alone in their treacherous position of supporting “unionization” and “strikes” by the cops. This position is even shared by many fake-Trotskyist organi-



Diário do Vaie

Municipal union leader Geraldo Ribeiro addresses July 4 rally. Inset: Union bulletin calls for “Mobilization Now!” against attempt by popular front, police and their puppet to oust Ribeiro and destroy the union.

zations and has characterized a number of the treacherous positions put forward by such groups as the PSTU [followers of the late Argentine pseudo-Trotskyist Nahuel Moreno] and Causa Operária [Workers Cause, linked to the Argentine Partido Obrero of Jorge Altamira]. (An article on the grotesque betrayal by the “LBI” [the centrist Internationalist Bolshevik League] on this question appears in this issue of *Vanguarda Operária*.) The followers of Guillermo Lora, leader of the Bolivian Partido Obrero Revolucionario, must explain not only the “anti-imperialist front” which Lora formed in 1971 with Bolivian ex-president General J. J. Torres, but also the POR’s statement that in Bolivia “a soviet-type organization, an anti-imperialist front, can include the police as a whole, as an institution” (G. Lora, *Resposta ao impostor N. Moreno* [1990])! We answer the fake-Trotskyists with the words Trotsky used to answer the German social democrats who said that cops recruited out of the working class were “workers”: “The worker who becomes a policeman in the service of the capitalist state is a bourgeois cop, not a worker” (“What Next?” [1932]).

In Brazil, support by “leftists” to the cops represents not only their social-democratic position on the state but also their traditional “blindness” towards racist oppression. The whole

world knows that in this country there are constant massacres of street children, most of whom are black; and the words *Candelária*, *Carandiru* and *Vigário Geral* have become synonyms for racist massacres. [These are locations of some of the most infamous killings of street children and prison inmates by the police in the "new democratic Brazil."] In the recent period we have seen the slaughter [of landless peasants] at Eldorado dos Carajás and the massacre of street children that Belo Horizonte cops carried out as a "protest" against their "low wages." Those who do not fight to separate the police from the labor movement have nothing in common with the fight to defend the exploited and oppressed!

## Principled Struggle and Witch Hunt in Volta Redonda

The city of Volta Redonda (state of Rio de Janeiro) is known for having Latin America's largest steel plant, and as the scene of military repression against the historic metal workers' strike of 1988. The Volta Redonda Municipal Workers Union (SFPMMVR) carried out seven strikes over the past years, stopping the 2,800 layoffs decreed by the Popular Front city administration of Mayor Paulo César Baltazar. At the end of 1995, with the political support of Luta Metalúrgica/Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil, comrade Geraldo Ribeiro, a veteran CUT militant, defeated the Força Sindical candidate and was elected president of the SFPMMVR (with a 62 percent majority) at the head of the *Municipários em Luta* (Municipal Workers in Struggle) slate. His program stressed that all levels of the police, including the military police and municipal *guardas*, are the "armed first of the bourgeois state" and that any "alliance" with them is incompatible with class independence, "since they bring men armed and trained by the bourgeois state into the unions."

After taking office Ribeiro undertook efforts to disaffiliate the municipal *guardas*, some of whom have been affiliated to the union. This principled struggle produced a growing po-

larization between, on the one side, the worker ranks of the union, a significant part of the oppressed population of the city and defenders of the victims of police repression, and on the other side the apologists and "defenders" of the cops—among them the commander of the *guarda*, as well as many popular frontists and fake-leftists. This is particularly significant in this city, where the highest number of street children in the country were murdered in 1988.

In late January a sinister slander campaign began against Ribeiro, the SFPMMVR and comrade Cerezo of Luta Metalúrgica, who had been an advisor to Ribeiro's class-struggle campaign. The slander campaign was taken up by the local bourgeois press after it was initiated by Causa Operária (C.O.), which used as its Trojan horse the teacher Carlos Alberto Teixeira de Paula in order to hurl accusations (which Teixeira knew were false) against Cerezo. Outside a meeting called on January 29 to clear up the question of the slanders, Teixeira got out of his car and tried to hit a comrade, but this attack was stopped through the intervention of Luta Metalúrgica (various witnesses observed this). Causa Operária used this "incident" to escalate its rabid diatribes against Luta Metalúrgica. Shortly thereafter, Teixeira published a letter in the *Diário do Vale* newspaper (8 February) to "clarify that I am not a member of any organized tendency." This was the prelude to his withdrawal from activity in the union—a humiliation for CO. Six months later, this individual returned to the union in order to support the campaign to oust Geraldo Ribeiro.

The witch hunt was taken up by Artur Fernandes, secretary of the SFPMMVR, who attempted to carry out a coup against Ribeiro and to destroy the influence of class-struggle politics within the union. In his dirty struggle, Artur joined directly with the bourgeois state. His coup faction distributed a leaflet calling for a union meeting on May 13 and calling for "everyone to defend the *guardas*." At that day's meeting the great majority of the workers voted for Geraldo to chair the meeting, but a member of the pro-cop faction grabbed Geraldo, who was defended by the participants in the meeting. The faction that sought to carry out a coup immediately called the Military Police in to "restrain the radicals of Luta Metalúrgica." Two Military Police soldiers were armed with pistols and shotguns, the favorite weapon of the ROTA strike force of the Military Police, known internationally as among the most violent in the world. Later, three municipal *guardas* also arrived, and a number of plainclothes police were also present at the assembly. One was overheard saying they had been hired by Artur at 10 Reals [approximately US\$12] apiece, but he said they were worried they might not be paid since they arrived late. Everything points to this provocation having been carefully prepared in order to provoke a "confrontation with the police" (which is something the class-struggle militants obviously do not want to occur). However, Geraldo succeeded in calming the cops down and nobody was hurt.

Together with the provocation by the pro-cop faction in the SFPMMVR, municipal *guarda* commander Freitas launched a lawsuit against the union. *Diário do Vale* (17 May) reported that Freitas was "one of the military officers who commanded

## -Guardas se dizem constrangidos por membros da Luta Metalúrgica

O Comandante diz que entidade quer excluir guardas municipais do Sindicato de Funcionários

Volta Redonda - O comandante da Guarda Municipal, o tenente reformado do Exército Paulo Roberto Freitas, vai reunir a todos os membros do corpo para explicar a situação dos guardas municipais que foram excluídos do Sindicato de Funcionários da Prefeitura Municipal de Volta Redonda. A Luta Metalúrgica não reconhece mais os guardas municipais, alegando que eles não são funcionários públicos, mas sim agentes de segurança privada. Freitas diz que os guardas municipais são funcionários públicos e que a Luta Metalúrgica está tentando excluir os guardas municipais do Sindicato de Funcionários da Prefeitura Municipal de Volta Redonda. Freitas diz que os guardas municipais são funcionários públicos e que a Luta Metalúrgica está tentando excluir os guardas municipais do Sindicato de Funcionários da Prefeitura Municipal de Volta Redonda.

**DIÁRIO DO VALE**

O Diretor da 2ª Divisão Regional de Polícia Civil (2ª DRC), Lúcio Zetterington, que já havia se comprometido com o Sindicato dos Funcionários da Prefeitura Municipal de Volta Redonda, disse que agiu para que os guardas municipais não fossem excluídos do sindicato. Zetterington disse que os guardas municipais são funcionários públicos e que a Luta Metalúrgica está tentando excluir os guardas municipais do Sindicato de Funcionários da Prefeitura Municipal de Volta Redonda.

Volta Redonda paper (17 May 1996) headlines, "Guards Say They Feel Pressured by Members of Luta Metalúrgica." Article begins: "Commander says the group wants to exclude municipal guards from Union of Municipal Workers."

## "A Historic Decision"—Union Ranks Vote Cops Out



### DECISÃO HISTÓRICA ASSEMBLÉIA DA BASE DECIDE

ANULAÇÃO DAS ACUSAÇÕES CONTRA GERALDO E M.L.G. BÊNIO  
DESFILIAÇÃO DA GUARDA MUNICIPAL DO SPPMVR;  
ESTADO DE GREVE E FUNDO DE GREVE;  
EXPULSÃO DA FRAÇÃO DE ARTUR DA DIREÇÃO DO SPPMVR COM B  
ESTATUTO DA ENTIDADE.

HOUVE UM MINUTO DE  
ELEIÇÃO EM MIMÓRIA  
DE ENFATIZ E O MESMO  
FOI ELEITO COMO SÍM-  
BOLO DA LUTA CONTRA  
OS ASSASSINATOS DE  
CHANCELO FRASU

...com a diretoria liderada  
por Ribeiro.

Outra decisão da assembleia  
foi a aprovação da desfiliação  
da Guarda Municipal da entida-  
de. A proposta vinha sendo dis-  
cutida há vários meses e era mais  
dos pontos de divergência

**DIÁRIO**

**DO VALE**

26 July 1996

On July 25, Volta Redonda Municipal Workers Union assembly voted to remove police from the union membership. Far left: union bulletin hails meeting. Left: Volta Redonda newspaper reports, "Another decision of the assembly was to approve the disaffiliation of the Municipal Guard."

the federal troops that evacuated the CSN [National Steel Company] plant in November 1988, after the clash in the strike when the workers William, Valmir and Barroso were murdered [by the army].

In response to the police attack on the March 13 union meeting, an international campaign was begun to demand: Police hands off the SPPMVR! This international campaign, initiated by the Partisan Defense Committee of the United States, gained support from unions from Brazil, Mexico, the United States and Canada to Europe, Australia, South Africa and Japan, as well as defenders of the oppressed such as Esteban Volkov (grandson of Leon Trotsky), black political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal and many others. This international campaign

must be redoubled today, in light of the most recent events.

Geraldo, together with other brothers and sisters who support the LQB program and many other activists, have answered the campaign of provocations and repression by intensifying the work of mobilizing and increasing the consciousness of the proletarian ranks.

Reaffirmation of the *Municipários em Luta* Program! ...A meeting of the [municipal] garage workers voted unanimously: The police should not be part of, and should not interfere with, the SPPMVR or the workers movement in general. Because they are the instrument and armed fist of the bourgeoisie."

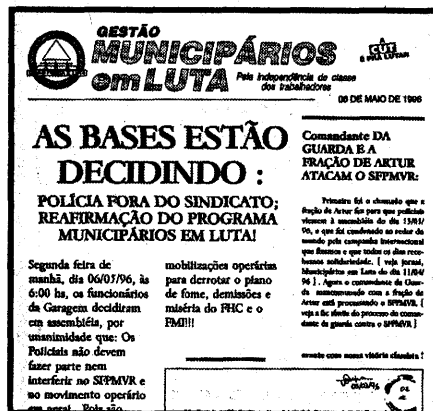
The bulletin also emphasized the class-struggle program:

"...which defends workers' class independence; women, their rights and gains; blacks; children; calls for socialism and the construction of a Revolutionary Workers Party which fights to put an end to capitalism; for proletarian opposition to the Popular Front and for workers mobilizations to defeat the starvation plan, layoffs and poverty of FHC [Brazilian president Fernando Henrique Cardoso] and the IMF!"

An example of the defense of women and blacks is the campaign carried out by the union, under the leadership of Geraldo, to demand the reinstatement of sister Regina Célia, a black woman fired by the city for having an "ugly face." (As we all know, "good appearance" has long been a racist code word for excluding blacks.)

On June 13, a union conference was held, with delegates elected in sectoral assemblies, on the basis of points which included the disaffiliation of the *guardas*, a point which was accepted by a wide margin at the conference itself. On June 19, a general union assembly was called at the Volta Redonda Municipal Hall in order to discuss the SPPMVR's campaigns and carry out the disaffiliation of the *guardas*. The events that followed were described in a bulletin that Geraldo published on July 4:

"On June 19 the cops, 'invited' by the sell-out faction, were sent by [Mayor] Baltazar to stop and shut down our assembly, violating our democratic and trade-union rights and the rights of all the workers. They want to stop the city workers from having a meeting, the purpose of which is not a confrontation but to defend our jobs and separate the *guardas* from the SPPMVR (the need for which was shown once again through their strike-breaking during the June 21 general strike, when once again the Municipal Guard and Military Police fired a shotgun into the air, arrested brother Marcello Carega and



**Union bulletin (6 May 1996) reports on garage workers' vote, "The Rank and File Is Deciding: Police Out of the Union."**

This effort included the publication of thousands of leaflets with Mumia Abu-Jamal's article on the campaign, "Police: Part of, or Enemies of, Labor?" (reprinted in this issue of *Vanguarda Operária*), and other bulletins, such as the one published on May 6, which began:

"The Rank and File Is Deciding: Police Out of the Union;



sought to break the municipal workers' strike). Now they have asked the bosses' courts to shut down the meeting and suspend Geraldo. They want to bury the wage reopener...and destroy the SFPMVR as a combative, class-struggle union. This is the meaning of their attempt to place the union under bourgeois court intervention, as in the days of the military dictatorship, and under the control of the Municipal Guard and Military Police."

The bulletin ended with the slogans: "The union is ours, not theirs! For the class independence of the workers! Out with the bosses' intervention and repression! Down with the suspension of Geraldo! Bosses' courts, MPs and *guardas* out of the SFPMVR! Defeat the interventionist coup provoked by the Artur faction! Respect the ranks and the workers! Workers of the world, unite! Bourgeoisie, hands off our union!" Workers carried signs with several of these slogans at an assembly of the ranks on July 4.

The bulletin had an enormous impact, in good part for its statement: "Remember the repression against the oil workers, the victims of [massacres of landless peasants in] Eldorado and Rondônia, and Vila Americana [a neighborhood in Volta Redonda], where a municipal *guarda* murdered a 12-year-old black child who was working to help his parents." As a result of this denunciation, *O Dia* [a Rio de Janeiro daily] published a full-page report on the murder of the black 12-year-old Ernane da Silva Lúcio in Vila Americana in October 1995, as well as on the brutal repression against street children.

The bosses' "justice" system appointed Artur as "president" of the SFPMVR during the 30-day suspension it decreed against Geraldo as a result of the demand by the pro-cop, sell-out faction, which scandalously has been advised by the fake-Trotskyists of the "LBI." But the proletarian ranks continue to mobilize. As we go to press, a petition is circulating to call a decisive meeting of the union ranks; one of the main points is "disaffiliation of the municipal *guardas* from the SFPMVR." This petition has already been signed by close to 300 union members, which is approximately 20 percent of the union and more than enough to call the assembly.

[Despite repeated maneuvers by Artur Fernandes to try to stop it, this union meeting was held on July 25 and attended by upwards of 150 workers. After a minute of silence in memory of Ernane da Silva Lúcio, the meeting reaffirmed Geraldo Ribeiro as union president and voted the "disaffiliation of the municipal *guardas* from the SFPMVR." —*The Internationalist*.]

Meanwhile, a rank-and-file bulletin against the suspension of Geraldo, the bosses' court intervention and the cop presence is circulating widely in the union, the Vila Americana neighborhood and other sectors of the working-class population of Volta Redonda and other cities. This bulletin included a declaration by Ernane's mother in support of the campaign to disaffiliate the *guardas*.

The bulletin also called for boycotting an illegitimate "assembly" called by the "intervenor" Artur on July 11. *Diário do Vale*, a bourgeois newspaper which supports the Artur fac-

tion and has carried out campaigns against Luta Metalúrgica/LQB, reports that "only 10 municipal workers" showed up at Artur's meeting! This puppet of the bosses openly complained that this was a result of the class-struggle bulletin. It is time to redouble this historically important campaign and carry it through to a victorious conclusion. As the July 4 bulletin said:

"Now is the time for all the unions to show their urgent solidarity in action!... Worker, take a stand with us in the campaign to defend the union. What's needed are mobilizations and protests by the CUT [labor federation], the unions, the landless peasants' movement, black organizations, organizations of the street children (victims of racist repression), students, left activists, etc.... Now is the time for young people in general, for university students who solidarize with the oppressed and exploited, to mobilize together with us. You must take a stand on one side or the other; with the workers or with the bosses. Defending the SFPMVR means defending all the workers and oppressed because *an injury to one is an injury to all*. Our cause is the cause of all."

The principled struggle for the separation of the cops, which has the complete support of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil as part of our Trotskyist program, must become a class-struggle banner of the workers movement, not just in Brazil and throughout this continent but all over the world. ■

# Leia!

## Uma obra crucial de Leon Trotsky

Leon Trotsky

**Os sindicatos na época da decadência imperialista**

Folheto editado pela  
Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil

Julho de 1996

R\$ 0,50

**Adquira o folheto escrevendo aos seguintes endereços:**

Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil  
Avenida Nelson dos Santos Gonçalves No. 590, Apto. 11  
Centro - CEP 27.260-640  
Volta Redonda, RJ, Brasil  
ou  
Internationalist Group  
Box 3321, Church Street Station  
New York, NY 10008, U.S.A.

**R\$1**

The class-struggle militants demand that the bosses' courts and cops get their hands off the Municipal Workers Union and the labor movement as a whole! Together with them and the LQB, last August the Internationalist Group launched an appeal for international labor solidarity against the repression in Volta Redonda. We reproduce here a number of the solidarity statements received in defense of Carega and Ribeiro.

From South Africa, the National Union of Mineworkers denounced the suspension of Ribeiro as "a violation of the very stature of any elected official who refuses to be the bosses' golden-boy." The South African Commercial Catering and Allied Workers Union issued a solidarity statement recalling how "the South African workers have been through hell" in the fight against apartheid racism. The Salvadoran telephone workers union (ASTTEL), which waged a 51-day strike in the teeth of junta repression in 1986, denounced the persecution of Geraldo and Marcello by the "Justice System," as well as the killings of street children and attacks on striking workers. The fight against police repression was underscored by

# Anti-Racist Unionists in Brazil



November 6, 1996

Volta Redonda Municipal Workers Union  
c/o LQB/LM  
Avenida Lucas Evangelista No. 414, Sala 306  
Barrio Sterrado, CEP 27-295-320  
Volta Redonda, RJ, Brazil

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We support the demand that all charges be dropped against Geraldo Ribeiro, President of the Municipal Workers Union, and Marcello Carrega, suspended by the local government from their positions as elected union officers. They were active in union-authorized strike activities.



## MERSEYSIDE PORT SHOP STEWARDS.

J. NOLAN : CHAIRMAN  
C/O T. G. W. U.  
TRANSPORT HOUSE, ISLINGTON,  
LIVERPOOL, L3 8 EQ

J. DAVIES : SECRETARY

Telephone: 0151 207 3388  
Fax: 0151 207 0696

2 October 1996

Internet No. GCOYNECIX.COMPUKLINK.CO.UK

Mr. Geraldo Ribeiro,  
Luta Metalurgica/SFPMVR,  
Av. Lucas Evangelista No. 418, Sala 306,  
Barrio Aterrado - CEP 27 295-320,  
Volta Redonda, RJ,  
BRAZIL.

Dear Brother Ribeiro,

I write on behalf of 500 sacked Liverpool dockworkers and their families. In September 1995, they were sacked for refusing to cross a picket line established by young dockers sacked by their employer.

Last month we had a demonstration outside Liverpool docks. Riot police and dogs were used to violate and disperse dockers and their supporters. Many of our dockers and supporters occupied gantry cranes and the roof of the main company building.

We condemn the actions against SFPMVR Trade Unionists and the fundamental breaches of human rights undertaken throughout the world.

Victory to our Sisters and Brothers of Brazil.

I will personally inform workers in this country of your struggle.



September 17, 1996

Volta Redonda Municipal Workers Union  
c/o LQB/LM  
Av. Lucas Evangelista No. 418, sala 306  
Barrio Aterrado-CEP 27.295-320  
Volta Redonda, RJ, Brazil

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

Our union and its 30,000 membership sends solidarity in your fight to have a union that is independent from the state. We have had our members attacked by the police at peaceful protests and so we know that the police are not neutral in these issues.

We also join in your struggle against racism, as union has experienced it first hand here in Los Angeles. We are a union largely composed of immigrant workers and must wage a fight against similar prejudices here in the U.S.



## International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union

Local 10 400 NORTH POINT, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF. 94133 • 776-8100

PRESIDENT: GEORGE ROMERO  
VICE PRESIDENT: TONY WINSTEAD

DALE KELLY  
SECRETARY TREASURER

### Motion In Defense of Brazilian Workers

Whereas, an important labor and anti-racist struggle is being waged in the Brazilian industrial center of Volta Redonda, and

Whereas, the municipal workers union (SFPMVR) in the state of Rio de Janeiro is under attack by the state for having disaffiliated police from their union, and

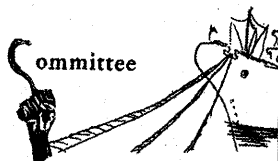
Whereas the police in Brazil have earned a notorious and unequalled reputation for wantonly killing street children and attacking striking workers, and

Whereas, Local 10's constitution (Article II Membership, Section 7) states "No .... deputized city, county or state police officer shall be permitted to hold membership in this union" because of their strikebreaking role in the 1934 General Strike, and

Whereas the state, as with the Veracruz (Mexico) longshoremen, has sent in the Military Police to break up union meetings, has suspended Geraldo Ribeiro from his elected position as union president and has charged union activist Marcello Carrega with "disobedience" for leading workers during the nationwide general strike on June 21, 1996, and

Therefore Be It Resolved that Local 10 fax a letter of protest immediately to the governor demanding: "Drop the Charges Against Geraldo Ribeiro and Marcello Carrega" and "Police Hands Off the Union!", and that we send a copy to the Volta Redonda municipal workers union.

## International Dockers Committee



15 November, 1996

Mr. Geraldo Ribeiro  
Luta Metalurgica/SFPMVR  
Av. Lucas Evangelista No. 418,  
Sala 306  
Barrio Aterrado-CEP 27 295-320  
Volta Redonda, RJ, Brazil

Dear Comrade Ribeiro,

The International Dockers Conference held in Paris, France 26-27 October, 1996 has sent a letter to Governor Alencar condemning state repression against your union the Volta Redonda Municipal Workers Union and demanding your reinstatement.

We dockers know well the vicious role police play as guardians of capitalist rule. We solidarize with your struggle. Keep us informed of developments in Brazil.

the U.S. West Coast longshoremen, whose resolution noted that the constitution of ILWU Local 10 states that no police officer is permitted in the union "because of their strikebreaking role in the 1934 General Strike." In addition to a statement by striking Liverpool dockers, the International Dockers' Committee, meeting in Paris, stated: "We dockers know well the

vicious role police play as guardians of capitalist rule."

In Los Angeles, Service Employees International Union Local 399 in Los Angeles noted that its "Justice for Janitors" protests have been attacked by the cops and "we know the police are not neutral in these issues." It added, "We also join in your struggle against racism," something the union's largely



immigrant membership experiences first hand. As a statement by SEIU Local 535 (Pasadena, California) stressed, "An injury to one is an injury to all."

\* \* \* \* \*

Statements demanding that the cops and courts get their hands off the Volta Redonda Municipal Workers Union and that all remaining charges against Geraldo Ribeiro be dropped can be sent care of:

LQB/LM

Av. Nelson dos Santos Gonçalves No. 590, Apto. 11  
Centro - CEP 27.260-640  
Volta Redonda, RJ, Brazil

and to:

Internationalist Group  
Box 3321, Church Street Station  
New York, NY 10008, U.S.A.

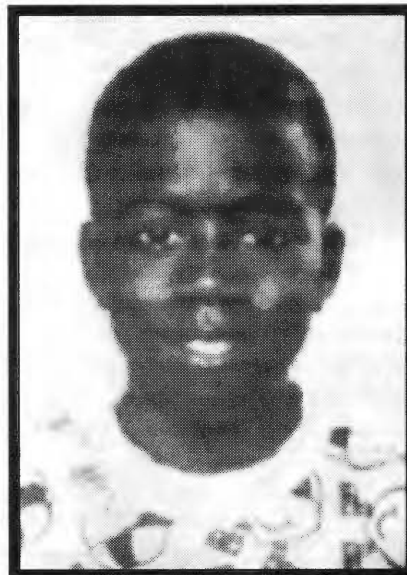
## Ernane da Silva Lúcio Victim of Racist Cop Terror

The fight against racist police terror is an international struggle, for wherever capital rules it uses its armed enforcers to suppress the workers and oppressed. This truth was driven home in Brazil during the struggle to remove municipal cops from the Volta Redonda Municipal Workers Union (SFPMVR), a fight led by our fraternal comrades of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil (LQB) and their supporters in the union. A 4 July 1996 leaflet by SFPMVR president Geraldo Ribeiro stressed the racist murder committed in October 1995 in the Volta Redonda neighborhood of Vila Americana, "where a municipal guarda (policeman) murdered a 12-

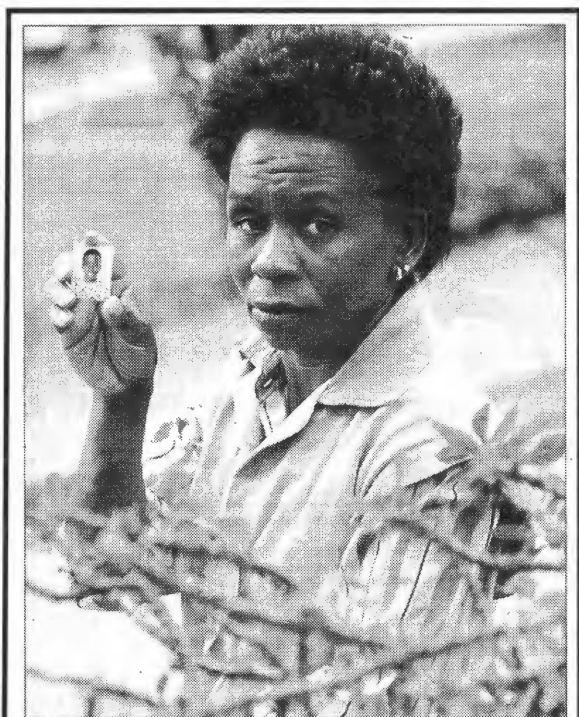
year-old black child who was working to help his parents." As a result of the union's fight, the case of Ernane da Silva Lúcio has focused attention in the region on police killing of children, as reflected in coverage by the Rio de Janeiro daily *O Dia* (see below). Ernane's mother Maria Beatriz issued a statement, reprinted in a subsequent leaflet by Ribeiro, declaring her support to the union's campaign, since the police "are not workers...but instead a group of murderers, as was shown clearly by the case of my son."

In New York City, the Internationalist Group brought the case of Ernane to the attention of the families of victims of racist cop terror in the Bronx-based Parents Against Police Brutality. Lillian Flores and David Muñiz, the parents of 15-year-old Frankie Arzuaga, who was slain by a cop in January 1996, sent a statement of solidarity to Ernane's mother, as did Miltá Calderón, mother of Aníbal Carrasquillo, Jr., gunned down by a Brooklyn cop in January 1995. Calderón said that "when we march through these streets of Brooklyn and Manhattan and the Bronx we will mention the case of your son," stressing the need to continue the struggle against police killings of minority youth. LQB militants read these statements at strike assemblies during a recent Volta Redonda teachers strike, as well as on a popular local radio show and at a showing of *Pixote*, an internationally acclaimed film on the life of street children in Brazil.

SFPMVR president Ribeiro and other LQB supporters have stressed that the fight against cop terror directed at labor and the poor is intimately linked to the fight for the working class to forge a revolutionary workers party to lead proletarian revolution and build a socialist society of equality, eliminating forever the police terror and racial oppression that are part and parcel of the capitalist system. ■



Ernane da Silva Lúcio



©Maria Beatriz espera que o assassino de seu filho, morto em outubro de 1995, seja condenado

### 'Um canalha matou meu filho querido'

A servente Maria Beatriz da Silva Lúcio, de 47 anos, todos os dias se levanta às 6 horas e costumava ajudar Narciso Cruz, dono do bar, a atender os clientes. Ela disse que estava empolgada em poder jogar pelo Fluminense.

Case of Ernane da Silva Lúcio symbolizes racist killings by Brazilian police. The Rio de Janeiro daily *O Dia* (7 July 1996) shows Ernane's mother holding his photo.

*continued from page 64*

had taught them a bitter lesson, they declared that a revolution is necessary to put an end to a system that had robbed them of their children.

The 38,000 members of the NYPD, the largest police force in the country, patrol minority black and Hispanic neighborhoods like an occupying army. In northern Manhattan, the South Bronx and wide swaths of Brooklyn, tactical forces consisting of several squad cars and a van to hold people arrested cruise menacingly up and down the streets at night. Racist police brutality has become so rampant that it is a subject of a report by Amnesty International. The purpose of such naked police-state tactics is intimidation, by the armed fist of a capitalist class that rules over a vast mass of oppressed people. The thugs in blue are emboldened because they know that many in immigrant neighborhoods hesitate to fight back because of fear of deportation. But the New York cops' brutality



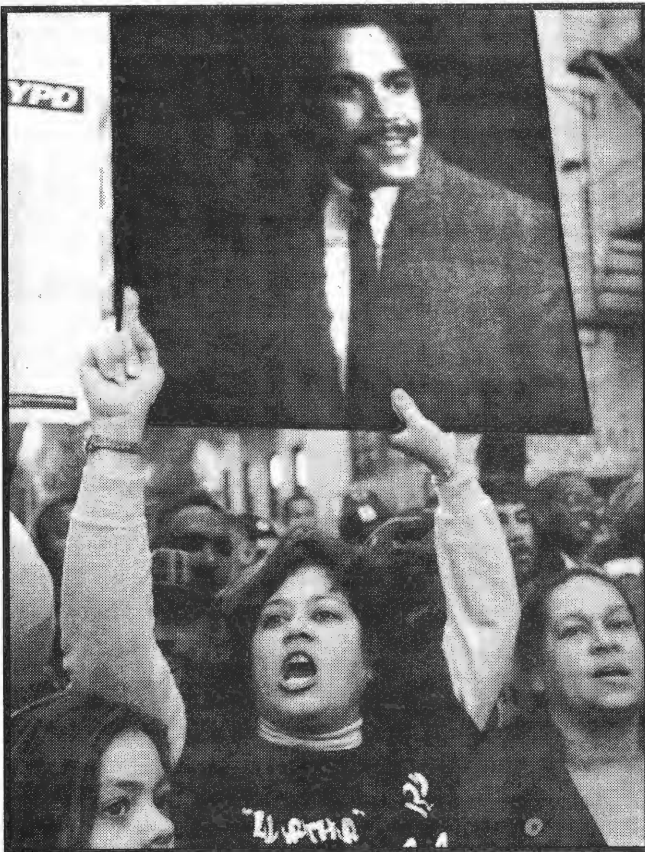
**NYC march against cop brutality led by parents holding pictures of their children who were killed by the police.**

has become so widespread and lethal, with the uniformed killers guaranteed impunity by a "justice system" that ruthlessly metes out injustice for the victims, that it has begun to spark an outraged reaction.

The focal point that concentrated this anger was the "trial" this fall of cop Francis Livoti for the killing of Anthony Báez, a case which symbolized the relation of the police to the largely Hispanic community of the Bronx. The legal proceedings in this case took place in the fortress-like Bronx County Courthouse, perched on commanding heights overlooking the Harlem River, which was the scene of Tom Wolfe's 1987 novel *The Bonfire of the Vanities*, a diatribe of Upper East Side racism, where the yuppie would-be masters of the universe come face to face with the masses they lord it over. Only this time the racist spectacle was being carried out in real life.

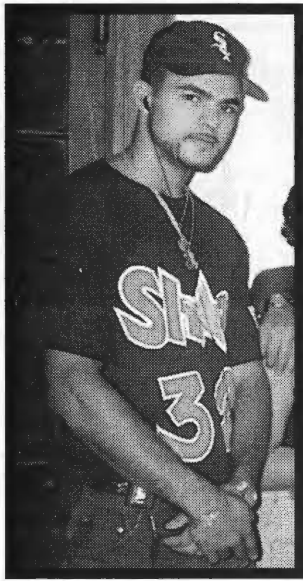
Two Christmases ago, Anthony Báez, newly married, was home from Florida for the holidays. He and his brother David were tossing a football around outside their house late at night, when the football hit a parked police car. Livoti busted David for this non-crime, and when Anthony protested, the cop and his partners got him down on the ground, hand-cuffed him and applied the choke hold until Anthony stopped breathing. His father, Ramón, testified at the trial how he screamed at the cops, "You're killing my son! Let him go! He's an asthmatic!" Livoti snapped back, "Your son's an asthmatic? Good for him" (*Daily News*, 27 September).

During the trial, the self-protective "blue wall of silence" surrounding the police was dented momentarily when cop Daisy Boria testified that she never saw Anthony Báez resisting arrest, only his limp body. This led Judge Sheindlin to denounce a "nest of perjury" in the precinct. But the cover-up worked, once again. The judge knew why he was there and what he had to do, and he did it. Killer cop Livoti walked. They always do. A South Bronx jury would undoubtedly have convicted—so in



David Handschuh/Daily News

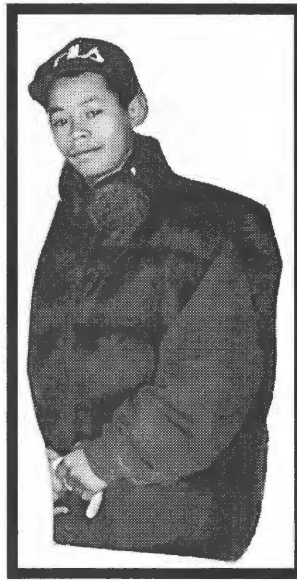
**Family of Anthony Báez protesting outside the 46th Precinct the night of verdict that let killer cop walk. Anthony's mother, Iris, right, next to his sister Elizabeth, holding picture.**



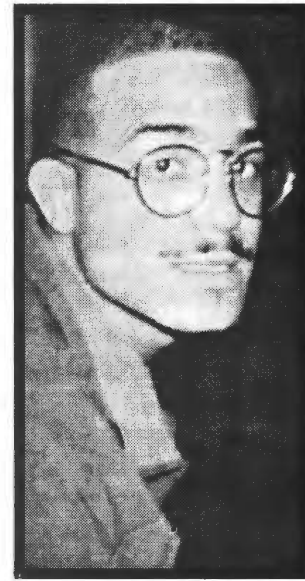
Hilton Vega



Anthony Rosario



Frankie Arzuaga



Aníbal Carrasquillo

the few cases where an indictment is brought, the cops routinely waive jury trials, preferring the odds with a judge.

Upon hearing the verdict, outraged cries of "murderer," "conspiracy" and "Where do we go for justice?" erupted in the Bronx Supreme Court. That night, October 7, a thousand people took to the streets, marching down the Grand Concourse to the 46th Precinct as riot cops hounded them all the way. When the Báez family got home, they found their house surrounded by scores of cops. "I thought they were here to finish my family," Ramón said. "Police officers with helmets and sticks and helicopters flying all over. They said I needed protection. From who? This was a peaceful demonstration and they're ready for war" (*New York Times*, 9 October).

### **"They're Ready for War" Against Workers and Minorities**

Everyone in the South Bronx, and all over black and Latin New York, knows that the murderous racist treatment dealt out to Anthony Báez is the daily reality faced by millions of minority residents. In another notorious police execution, in January 1995, Anthony Rosario and Hilton Vega were riddled with bullets by cops lying in wait in a Bronx apartment. It was later shown that the two youths were on the floor with their hands over their heads. When the parents obtained an independent autopsy, it showed that Anthony was shot seven times in the back while lying down. The cops were naturally absolved. In fact, since they had both been bodyguards for Giuliani as off-duty police during the 1994 election campaign, they got a call of concern from the mayor himself on the night of the shooting. As a result of this cold-blooded police murder of their son Anthony and their nephew Hilton, in July 1995 Margarita and Tony Rosario got together with others who have suffered similar tragedies to form Parents Against Police Brutality, not to mourn but to organize.

The cases they have been protesting are legion, and not

only in the Bronx. Around the time of the killing of Rosario and Vega, a plainclothes cop in Flatbush allegedly saw Aníbal Carrasquillo "peering into parked car windows"—so he shot Anibal in the back. In March 1995, police in Sheepshead Bay shot 16-year-old Yong Xin Huang to death in a driveway outside a friend's house. He and his friend had been playing with a pellet gun; a neighbor called the police, and when the cops came they smashed Huang's face into a glass door, then executed him with a shot to the back of the head with 9 mm. Glock pistol. In March, relatives of Yong Xin Huang and Aníbal Carrasquillo were arrested for a sit-in at the Brooklyn D.A.'s office, protesting the failure of D.A. Charles Hynes to indict a single cop.

Then, in January 1966, Brooklyn cops cut down Frankie Arzuaga, 15. Frankie was a passenger in the back seat of a parked car when three cops from the 90th Precinct approached the car and blew him away. The killing was never listed on the police blotter. At a recent meeting of Parents Against Police Brutality, Frankie's stepfather David Muñiz told how, for three days after his son was killed by the police, he and his wife received no official notification of his death. Only after they contacted a reporter from *El Diario/La Prensa* did the police killing come to light. The family and some of Frankie's friends posted flyers around the neighborhood asking for information and possible witnesses to come forward, and to call the family's beeper number. On Mother's Day, David Muñiz got a call, from the 90th Precinct:

"He said, 'Hello, is this Frankie's Hotline?' He said, 'Does your wife like the Mother's Day gift we gave her? Now that Frankie is dead, that son of a bitch won't be stealing any more cars.'

"In the background you could hear, 'Frankie's dead, Frankie's dead,' as if he were having a party.

"There was another time when we received another call from the precinct. The caller said, 'You know that mural on the side of your building?' I said, 'Yes.' He said, 'You know it



doesn't look like Frankie.' I asked him why. He said, 'Because it doesn't have a hole in the head.'

On a small scale, the demonstrations and gatherings of Parents Against Police Brutality recall the "Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo" in Argentina, who brought to worldwide attention the deaths and "disappearances" of their children at the hands of the military death-squad regime that seized power in 1976. So prevalent are the beatings and outright murder of black, Asian and Latino youth at the hands of NYPD that in June Amnesty International released a special 72-page report on "United States of America: Police Brutality and Excessive Force in the New York Police Department." The investigation reviewed cases of deaths in police custody between 1988 and 1995—"most of which took place on the streets"—including those who "died of asphyxia from pressure on neck or chest" (chokehold), prisoners who allegedly died after "violent struggles," or after being sprayed with pepper spray. The report listed among the standard operating procedures "repeated kicks or punches by officers using fists, batons or other instruments such as police radios or flashlights, sometimes while the suspect was handcuffed or otherwise restrained."

While studiously avoiding the word "racist," the Amnesty report states that the "evidence suggests that the large majority of the victims of police abuses are racial minorities, particularly African-Americans and people of Latin-American or Asian descent." It adds, "More than two thirds of the victims in the cases involved were African-American or Latino and most, though not all, of the officers involved were white.... Nearly all of the victims in the cases of deaths in custody (including shootings) reviewed by Amnesty International were members of racial minorities."

As for legal action against the uniformed criminals, the study reports that "at the time of writing only one New York City police officer since 1977 had been convicted of a homicide while on duty." The 1994 Mollen Commission report highlighted police corruption, particularly concerning drugs. Since

then, Amnesty reports, "while the incidence of corruption has reportedly fallen in the past two years, allegations of police brutality have continued to rise." This coincides with the "crime-busting" initiatives of racist mayor Giuliani, who rounded up thousands of minority youth and homeless under the guise of going after "quality of life" crimes. In the first year of Giuliani's administration, the number of civilians killed by police firearms in 1994 rose by more than a third over the previous year, while the numbers who died in police custody jumped by 53.5 percent in the same period.

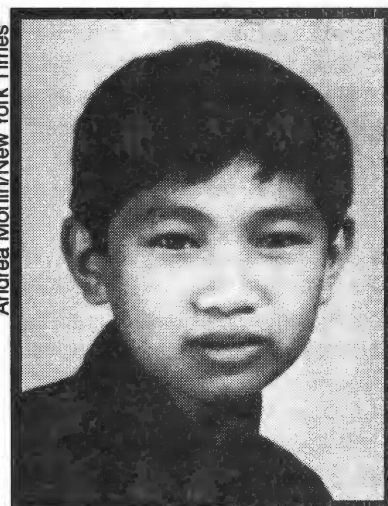
### The Illusion of Civilian Boards "Policing the Police"

With a wealth of statistics, the Amnesty International report's "recommendations" are as pathetic as they are absurd: "an independent inquiry into police brutality and deaths in custody," "greater transparency in investigation of complaints," publication of regular stats, and a call on the federal government to maintain national statistics on police shootings and deaths in custody. Anyone suffering from the illusion that civilian review boards are able to "police the police" should read the *New York Times* (5 December) report on the miserable record of the city's "Civilian Complaint Review Board," set up in 1993. Norman Siegel, executive director of New York

Civil Liberties who led the drive for this fraud, concluded: "We created a monster." Of the thousands of cases filed against the cops every year, only a tiny fraction are then officially "substantiated"; when they are documented and sent back to the police department for resolution, it was found that "investigations take so long that the 18-month statute of limitations expires." No kidding.

Meanwhile, the killer cops continue their deadly work. On June 13, three white plain-clothes cops in East Flatbush staked out a car, and when Aswan Watson, a 23-year-old black youth, climbed into the driver's seat, they shot him 18 times. Hundreds of residents poured into the street to protest this racist outrage. On July 4, an NYPD officer shot an unarmed black man, Nathaniel Gaines Jr., 26, of Yonkers, as he was standing alone on a subway platform. How to explain that Gaines was killed by a

Andrea Mohin/New York Times



Yong Xin Huang



Linda Rosier/New York Times

Friends of Aswan Watson put up signs marking the spot in East Flatbush, Brooklyn, where cops shot him to death last June.



shot in the back? "Tests Indicate Man Killed by Officer Was Fleeing," reported the *New York Times* (10 July). This is the hoary *ley de fuga* (law of flight) used to exonerate murderous Latin American police: the suspect was shot supposedly "while trying to escape."

What happened to Anthony Báez and his family is not an aberration, not a case of a few "rotten apples" on the force, not a question of transparency or civilian or judicial review—this is how the *injustice* system of racist American capitalism grinds on, relentlessly, time after time, mangling the bodies and lives of the poor, oppressed and working people it is designed to suppress.

New York is, in this way at least, a microcosm of the entire country. The videotaped beating of Rodney King in L.A., the police murder of Johnny E Gammage, a Pittsburgh businessman and cousin of Steelers lineman Ray Seals, show the danger black people face by the simple act of driving a car. In Texas this year, Mae Jamison, the first black woman astronaut in space, filed a complaint against a cop, accusing him of brutality during a traffic stop where she was forced to the ground and arrested. The disproportionate number of blacks pulled over for traffic "infractions" is so high that some bitterly complain of being arrested for "DWB," or "Driving While Black." A 1993 survey carried out by the University of Florida found that blacks or Latinos were the victims in 97 percent of brutality cases documented nationwide.

The arrogant New York cops apparently think that the island of New York is too small for them and want to export their killing to the island of Hispaniola. Now that the Dominican Republic has a NYC-raised mayor, Leonel Fernández, Giuliani and his top cop Safir concocted a plan to bring "peace" to "Little Santo Domingo" in Washington Heights by dispatching the NYPD to Santo Domingo. On the other side of the island, former NYC police chief Ray Kelly was sent to Port-au-Prince to put a little gloss on the murderous police there after Clinton's 1994 invasion/occupation of Haiti. But the Dominican workers and oppressed had their fill of U.S. occupation in 1965, and a popular outcry made short shrift of this outrageous imperialist scheme.

What is to be done about the clear and present danger to the minority, poor and working people represented by these guardians of "law and order"? With civilian review boards increasingly discredited, the Rev. Al Sharpton is floating another gimmick: require the police to live in the neighborhoods they police. Pretty rich coming from this demagogue who is a former FBI fink. That's right, Sharpton wore a wire for the feds, spying on black radicals as well as on black bourgeois politicians for the Reagan government, whose point man in NYC was the federal prosecutor for the southern district of New York...Rudolph Giuliani.

If put to a popular vote, a residency requirement for cops could become a referendum on racism over the army of police who retreat to lily-white suburbs in Rockland and Nassau counties after stomping on the minority residents of NYC every day. But there should be no illusions that this would stop the cops from dispensing summary racist "justice" on the streets.



Internationalist Photo

### Internationalist Group at 9 December 1996 Wall Street protest for black death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Anyone who thinks that cops won't shoot their own neighbors should consider the case of Charles Campbell, 37, a black sanitation worker, who was shot in cold blood on October 3 by a cop in Dobbs Ferry, Westchester County, for the crime of parking in a space "reserved" for customers of his father's deli. "Community policing" is a fraud, just as were earlier schemes to hire more minority cops. Today some of the more notorious killers in the NYPD are black and Hispanic cops.

Under racist mayor Giuliani, the former G-man with an Eliot Ness complex, New York cops think they are untouchables. They go rampaging through Washington hotels, waving pistols and terrorizing guests, as they did last year during a national police convention. Trigger-happy cops with Glocks pop anyone they consider "suspects" or "perps," not to mention bystanders, subway riders, drivers who are parking, drivers who are stopped at stop lights, passengers in cars, pedestrians on the street, patrons in restaurants, young men playing football, young men outside bars, young men inside bars—*particularly if the victims are black, Hispanic or Asian*—as well as roaming around housing projects in off-duty vigilante squads, and not infrequently bumping off their own wives and girlfriends. They think they can get away with murder, and history—recent and past—shows they are right. Why? Because they are the enforcers of the monopoly of violence in the hands of the capitalist state, the apparatus set up to guarantee the profits and the rule of the bourgeoisie.

### Mobilize the Power of Labor in Defense of the Oppressed—Build a Workers Party!

Removing Giuliani and putting in a Democrat would solve nothing. When black Democratic mayor David Dinkins came into office, the cops went on a killing spree (mostly in His-

panic neighborhoods). During his administration, Dinkins hired several thousand more police. Moreover, Bronx district attorney Johnson and borough president Ferrer are both liberal Democrats, but they didn't try killer cop Livoti for murder any more than Democratic Brooklyn D.A. Hynes brought charges against the cop murderers of Anibal Carrasquillo and Yong Xin Huang. New York City has been a Democratic Party stronghold since the turn of the century, voting 92 percent for Clinton in November. The AFL-CIO tops got out the vote for the Democrats like never before in recent years. But where did that get us? In the 1980s, Democratic mayors across the country enforced the cutbacks ordered by Republican Reagan. Now a Republican NYC mayor will enforce the vicious welfare "reform" passed by the Republican Congress and signed by Democrat Clinton. Together Democrats and Republicans are the partner parties of capital—they constitute the property party against the propertyless.

To get rid of racist cop terror, you have to sweep away the system that spawns it. That system is capitalism, and what's needed is a socialist revolution to make the working class and its allies the rulers of society. But just chanting about "revolution" against "the system" and "the pigs," as the Maoists of Bob Avakian's RCP (Revolutionary Communist Party) do, for example, is not a program for making the revolution. At best it is play-acting, sometimes in particularly foolish ways. The key element needed is a fight to build a Leninist vanguard party of the proletariat on the basis of a program to mobilize the working class and its allies in sharp *class* struggle against their oppressors, linking the fight against racist terror, unemployment and the other ravages of capitalism to the need for the working class to take power. As various AFL-CIO leaders have from time to time admitted, there is a *one-sided* class war in this country. The fact that the bosses and their politicians have been able to ride roughshod over the unions and minority communities is centrally the responsibility of these sellout labor fakery and the liberal and nationalist black misleaders who have tied the mass of the workers and poor to the Democrats.

In New York, there are powerful integrated unions, beginning with the Transport Workers and the several city and hospital workers unions. The proper and necessary response to the deadly racist terror of the cops should be a mobilization spearheaded by labor and bringing out the masses of the ghettos and barrios to shut the city down. At the height of the City Council maneuvering over forming a civilian review board, a violent mob of thousands of armed cops surrounded City Hall and were egged on by Giuliani yelling obscenities at the black mayor. To put a stop to the murderous gang in blue uniforms, it is necessary to mobilize the power of the working class and the oppressed. Only through such a struggle is it possible to overcome the divisions among the oppressed, as the racist rulers seek to set one ethnic group against another, employed workers against the unemployed, etc. The key is to forge a revolutionary leadership, with a core of cadres tested in the class struggle, like the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky which led the October 1917 Russian Revolution.

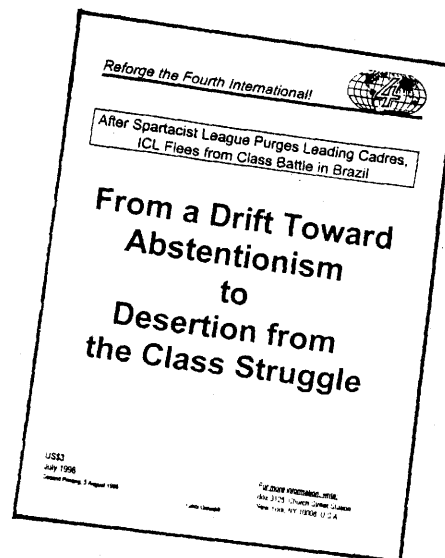
As the families of the victims of police terror courageously

struggle against a system that would destroy them and their loved ones, we renew our determination that Frankie Arzuaga, Anthony Báez, Charles Campbell, Anibal Carrasquillo, Nathaniel Gaines, Anthony Rosario, Hilton Vega, Aswan Watson, Yong Xin Huang and all the many others will be avenged. In fighting to build a workers party as a tribune of the people, a champion of all the oppressed against their oppressors, we keep their memories alive.

The Trotskyists struggle to mobilize the power of the working class in defense of the besieged minority populations against police attack and the all-sided racist assault by the capitalist rulers. We fight to defend the limited gains of the civil rights struggle now under massive attack, and against the xenophobic racist campaign to expel immigrants, "legal" or otherwise, from the schools, from access to health care and from this country itself. To fight the bipartisan, all-sided war on the poor and oppressed requires building a revolutionary workers party in the fight to reforge the Fourth International, to organize and lead the struggle for international socialist revolution to do away with the capitalist system and its racist cops and courts, from Johannesburg and Santo Domingo to New York. That is the way—the *only* way—to put an end to police brutality against minorities, poor and working people.

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**Police Are the Armed Fist of Capitalism**

# Racist NYC Cop Terror Sets Off Angry Protests

On December 9, at a Wall Street demonstration for freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal, the black radical journalist on Pennsylvania's death row, several of the speakers dramatically linked the threat of execution hanging over Jamal to the daily reality of racist police terror in the streets of New York. Iris Báez, whose 29-year-old son Anthony was killed two years ago by a cop's chokehold for the "crime" of playing football in the street, read off the names of several of the dozens of victims of the NYPD. She began with Eleanor Bumpurs, the black grandmother who was blasted by a 12-gauge shotgun at the front door of her Bronx apartment in 1984 when a police tactical squad came to collect \$387.40 in back rent. In a voice filled with anger, Mrs. Báez continued listing the names, Anthony Rosario, Hilton Vega, Federico Pereira, María Rivas—just a few of the dozens who have been shot down, choked or beaten to death by the police in the last couple of years, during the reign of Mayor Giuliani, the former federal D.A. who was elected as the cops' candidate.

"They killed my son three times," said Iris Báez. Once when a killer cop choked the life out of him in front of his protesting family. A second time when they refused to indict the badge-toting killer for murder, and a third time when Judge Sheindlin found him "not guilty" even of the far lesser charge of criminally negligent homicide. "I raised my children to respect the system," said Anthony Báez' mother. "But the system doesn't respect us, the police don't respect us. Now I'm demanding respect." "Don't let them add Mumia's name to that list," she urged the crowd. She and Margarita Rosario, whose son and



Humberto Arellano/El Diario-La Prensa

**Over 1,000 demonstrators marched down Grand Concourse in the Bronx to protest verdict absolving the cop who killed Anthony Báez.**

nephew were executed by NYC cops, called from the platform to oust Giuliani. And saying that their own experiences  
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